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Peoples and Cultures of the World

Course Guidebook

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Vanderbilt University



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Peoples and Cultures of the World

Scope:

What do we as humans share and what makes us different? What sorts of behavior are acceptable and what are not in different societies? What can this tell us about ourselves as human beings? This course addresses such questions by examining a wide range of cultural diversity. In looking at cultures around the world, we show how anthropology acts as a “mirror for humanity,” teaching us about ourselves and about others.

Built around compelling examples of exotic customs, this course shows how cultures differ (from religious beliefs and marriage practices to political organization and economics) and addresses the question of why such differences exist and persist in the modern world. Studying cultural diversity also allows us to look at our own customs in a new light, and, in so doing, stimulates creativity.

We begin with a brief overview of the four subfields of anthropology: physical anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, and cultural anthropology. Physical anthropology defines our field of inquiry (what makes us biologically human) and shows how our evolutionary heritage continues to influence our actions. Archaeology gives us a sense of scale when speaking of societal trends and is increasingly meaningful for indigenous peoples seeking to reclaim their past.

The primary focus of the course is on modern cultures. To attempt to interpret other cultures, we must first understand language—not just the dictionary meanings of words (even if there were dictionaries of these languages) but the subtleties of communication. Sociolinguistics shows how dialect differences convey a great deal of cultural meaning; in English, for example, even women and men have distinct patterns of speaking that often lead to misunderstanding. Through such examples we will study the ways that language molds the very way we perceive and think about the world. This leads us to examine how mental models and pervasive metaphors (such as “time is money”) shape our culture and how religion and magic fit into cultural schemes.

Having started at the level of language and thought—that is to say, with the individual—we move to how the individual fits into society through rites of passage and kinship relations. We focus particularly on the differences between matrilineal and patrilineal societies. This leads us to a discussion

of marriage patterns (monogamous and polygamous) and the role of romantic love in societies that practice arranged marriages.

We then turn to an overview of cultures at different levels of social complexity, from bands and tribes to chiefdoms and states. We look to the subsistence strategies of gathering-and-hunting bands and horticulturalist rainforest dwellers. We find that economic relations in these cultures are firmly embedded in social relations and that reciprocity and redistribution are the norm under certain circumstances. These societies also have different types of political organization, and we look at the problems of leadership in small-scale societies. We examine violence and warfare, as well as ways of keeping the peace.

Modern native cultures cannot be seen as isolated entities. Since the glory days of Western expansion, these cultures have come into increasing contact with the outside world. We look to some of the deadly misunderstandings that accompanied early European contact. We then turn to the expansion of capitalist economies. We find that the rational choice models of traditional economics do not hold up under cross-cultural comparison, and we review the attempts of economists and anthropologists to come to terms with cultural differences.

The course concludes with a discussion of how globalization has affected native peoples around the world in surprising ways, focusing particularly on the Maya of Guatemala and Mexico, where I have conducted my long-term ethnographic fieldwork. We examine the rise of global economies and how native ways of life have changed as a result. We also look to the resurgence of ethnic groups—and the potentials and pitfalls of a world increasingly divided along ethnic lines.

The Field of Inquiry

Lecture One

The Study of Humanity

Scope: From the Greek *anthropos* and *logos*, anthropology is, quite literally, the study of humankind. And anthropologists take this broad mandate seriously. Other fields give us valuable insights into particular areas (for example, economics, history, or biology), but anthropology's genius is in looking at the interconnections among these spheres, bringing to bear the widest range of knowledge to understand the complexities and contradictions of the human condition.

In attempting a holistic perspective, anthropology spans the divide between science and humanity. Although we develop hypotheses and strive for scientific rigor in collecting data, the signature method of cultural anthropology (participant observation) is fundamentally subjective. Participant observation is going “there” (wherever “there” may be) and studying “them” (whomever “they” may be), living our lives as the natives live, if just for a year or two, so that we can contextualize the hard facts (from survey figures to caloric intake) with a subjective understanding of what their lives are like.

Outline

- I.** Cultural anthropology studies the range of human diversity found in the world and uses these data to address fundamental questions about human nature.
 - A.** Culture is learned.
 - B.** Despite how we often speak about them, cultures are not homogenous.
 - C.** The one great rule of culture is that it is always changing.
- II.** Anthropology is the study of humankind.
 - A.** Anthropology is one of the few academic disciplines that transcends the boundary between the sciences and the humanities.

1. From the Greek, *anthropos* means “humanity” and *logos* means “writing about” or “the study of.” Anthropologists employ the tools of scientific research (testable hypotheses, random sampling, and so on) but also strive for more subjective understanding of the people we study.
2. Max Weber distinguishes between *Verstehen* (“understanding”) and *Erklärung* (“explanation”); anthropologists seek both *Verstehen* and *Erklärung*.

B. Rather than looking at just one aspect of the human condition, anthropology adopts a holistic approach.

1. Economics, political science, psychology—these are all valuable disciplines. But alone, they each give us just part of the picture.
2. Named for a famous Japanese film, the Rashomon effect describes the phenomenon of different people perceiving the same event in different ways.
3. Anthropology looks at the interrelations between, for example, religion and economics, arguing that the human condition must be understood from a holistic perspective.

III. The discipline of anthropology is divided into four main subfields.

- A.** Biological anthropology looks at human evolution and modern biological variation.
- B.** Archaeology is the study of ancient civilizations and peoples, attempting to reconstruct past culture based on material remains.
- C.** Linguistics is the study of language and the many ways that humans communicate.
- D.** Cultural anthropology—called *social anthropology* in England—is the study of modern human traditions, customs, and worldviews.

IV. Despite its wide range of study, anthropology is united around a general perspective on humanity.

- A.** Anthropologists affirm that it is fundamentally important to study the range of human diversity, both past and present, in order to situate ourselves in the world.
- B.** By encouraging us to suspend our natural ethnocentrism, anthropology also provides an important way of understanding our own culture.

- C. It is useful when talking about other cultures to distinguish between *emic* and *etic* perspectives. *Emic* is the view from within a culture; *etic* is the presumably more objective view of an outsider.

Readings:

Thomas Barfield, *The Dictionary of Anthropology*.

Gary Ferraro, *Classic Readings in Cultural Anthropology*.

Emily Schultz and Robert Lavenda, *Cultural Anthropology*.

Internet Resources:

<http://anthro.palomar.edu/tutorials/cultural.htm>. Cultural Anthropology Tutorials. Dr. Dennis O'Neil, Palomar College.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the difference between “objective” and “subjective” forms of understanding? How does anthropology attempt to reconcile the two?
2. How can different perspectives of the same event or phenomenon result in radically different memories—and what does this tell us about the limits of objectivity?
3. Can studying other cultures inspire creative thinking about our own society?

Lecture Two

The Four Fields of Anthropology

Scope: Anthropology comprises four broad subfields: biological anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, and cultural anthropology. This course focuses on cultural diversity and human commonalities around the world, but we cannot study culture in isolation. Thus, in this lecture, we look to biological anthropology and the study of early humans to discover what makes our remarkable species unique—from big brains and language to opposable thumbs and bipedalism. In a similar vein, we turn to archaeology for lessons from the past about the rise and fall of civilizations, trying to understand the present in terms of the distant past. Much of what we know about other cultures comes to us through interviews; thus, an understanding of language and linguistics allows us to interpret what we learn in the field.

Today, biological anthropologists, archaeologists, and linguists are turning their talents to a number of unconventional uses. Forensic anthropologists, for example, work with the FBI to reconstruct crime scenes and determine causes of death in badly decomposed remains. Archaeologists have excavated garbage dumps to help large cities better understand where waste comes from (with unexpected results). Linguists, working with archaeologists and others, have created signs to mark nuclear waste dumps that are designed to be readable in 10,000 years.

Outline

- I. Biological anthropology studies the physical adaptations of humans to their environment; we look to biological anthropology to define what it means to be human.
 - A. *Homo sapiens* first arose some 200,000 years ago in the savannas of east Africa.
 - B. A small number of very important features make modern humans biologically unique.
 1. Humans possess opposable thumbs, which allows for tool use, and walk bipedally, which frees the hands for other tasks.

2. Humans have large brains, which, in turn, allows for the development of both language and culture.
 3. Humans practice a “K” strategy of reproduction, meaning we have very few offspring but care for them intensely.
 4. Culture has allowed humans to opt out of many of the environmental pressures of natural selection.
- C. *Race* is a loaded term and one that biological anthropologists generally avoid.
1. Genetic variation is greater within human races than between them, although interracial differences are especially evident in skin color, facial proportions, and similar characteristics.
 2. Thus, race is not very useful as a biological category, although it remains an important social category.
- D. Biological anthropology has branched out in recent years to include not only the study of early human evolution and human variation but also the burgeoning field of forensic anthropology.

II. Archaeology is the study of ancient cultures through their material remains.

- A. Archaeology can teach us lessons from the past about the rise and fall of civilizations and the histories that go unrecorded in the history books.
- B. Archaeologists employ a number of methods.
1. The most basic is “dirt archaeology”—digging up the remains of ancient societies. Archaeologists are often hindered by the scarcity of remains.
 2. Archaeologists have turned to new technologies, including satellite imagery, mass spectrometry, and isotope isolation analyses.
- C. In addition to traditional archaeology, some researchers have used their methods to study uncommon subjects, such as the archaeology of modern U.S. garbage dumps.

III. Linguistics is the study of human language.

- A. Anthropological linguists are concerned with understanding how people actually speak, or descriptive linguistics. In contrast, prescriptive linguistics seeks to set standards for how people *should* speak.

- B. Sociolinguistics is the study of language use and social meanings and holds the most importance for cultural anthropology.
 - C. Linguists have begun to pursue a number of unusual applications for their research, including artificial intelligence, marketing, and monument design.
- IV. Cultural anthropology examines social structures (legal, economic, and civil systems), as well as the more ephemeral cultural glue that holds them together.
- A. Culture provides a template for behavior rather than strictly prescribing actions.
 - B. Culture is shared but is not perfectly distributed among any given population.
 - C. In recent years, cultural anthropologists have turned their attentions toward their own cultures, and a number now work in marketing and design, among other nontraditional venues.

Readings:

Bill Bass and Jon Jefferson, *Death's Acre: Inside the Legendary Forensic Lab—the Body Farm—Where the Dead Do Tell Tales*.

Michael Brown, *The Search for Eve*.

Brian Fagan, *People of the Earth: An Introduction to World Prehistory*.

William Rathje, *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage*.

Internet Resources:

<http://anthro.palomar.edu/tutorials/physical.htm>. Physical Anthropology Tutorials. Dr. Dennis O'Neil, Palomar College.

Questions to Consider:

1. What makes humans biologically unique? What could have been the evolutionary pressures that resulted in bipedalism and big brains?
2. What is race—biologically and culturally? Why is it such an important social category?
3. What can the study of ancient societies teach us about our own culture?

Concepts of Culture

Lecture Three

Culture and Relativity

Scope: The modern anthropological concept of culture has been widely adopted across academic disciplines and in popular discourse. Nineteenth-century anthropologists conceived of culture as singular: Synonymous with civilization, it was seen as something that people possessed to greater and lesser extents. Often, such views were developed as part of evolutionary schemes, the most memorable being Lewis Henry Morgan's "savages, barbarians, and civilization" typology of human societies. By the turn of the 20th century, Franz Boas, a German Jewish immigrant to the United States, was challenging such evolutionary perspectives and developing a pluralistic notion of culture. Boas argued that cultures emerge from historically particular circumstances, not from a universal evolutionary trajectory. Modern definitions stress the malleability and fluidity of culture, although anthropologists have come to see the limits of Boas's cultural relativity.

Outline

- I. The modern discipline of anthropology was born of a 19th-century fascination with science and evolution.
 - A. Evolution was very much an idea in the air in 19th-century European intellectual circles.
 1. Charles Darwin gave us the most scientifically plausible mechanism for how evolution works in his theory of natural selection.
 2. The phrase "survival of the fittest" was coined not by Darwin but by Sir Herbert Spencer in a line of thought that has come to be known as "social Darwinism."
 - B. Edward B. Tylor (1832–1917) wrote some of the discipline's founding texts and held Oxford University's first position in anthropology (which came to be known as "Mr. Tylor's science").
 1. Tylor gave the most enduring definition of culture: "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law,

morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”

2. Tylor’s grand scheme ranked societies along a continuum of progress and unilineal evolution; he was also interested in documenting cultural “survivals,” those odd elements left over from times past.

C. In the United States, it was Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881) who pioneered anthropology.

1. Morgan, a semi-retired lawyer, became interested in a Seneca group that lived not far from his home in Rochester, New York.
2. After second-hand study of cultures around the world, Morgan devised a scheme of unilineal cultural evolution that progressed from savages to barbarians to civilization.

II. Franz Boas (1858–1942) founded modern American anthropology—earning it academic legitimacy and providing its enduring principle of cultural relativity.

A. Boas’s theoretical contributions must be understood in terms of his personal history—as the son of middle-class German Jewish parents and as an immigrant to the United States.

1. Boas pursued studies in geography and physics, writing his Ph.D. dissertation on the “psycho-physics” of the color of sea water.
2. After his compulsory military service, Boas pursued his boyhood dream of making an expedition to the Arctic. There, he lived with the Inuit and was deeply moved by their kindness and humanity; his writings on the Baffin Island people began his career in anthropology.
3. After immigrating to the United States, Boas began to conduct fieldwork among the Kwakiutl people of the northwest coast. He saw this as a form of “salvage ethnography,” capturing customs before they died out.

B. Boas fundamentally changed conceptions of “culture.”

1. His position must be understood in part as a reaction to the evolutionists.
2. He stressed the historical particularism of each group.
3. He dismantled pseudo-scientific claims about differences between the races.

C. Boas's most enduring contribution has been the perspective of cultural relativity, which holds that observers must suspend their ethnocentrism to understand cultures on their own terms.

1. The seed of this idea was planted with Boas's study of the color of sea water, in which he noted the culturally relative way the color spectrum is broken up.
2. This cultural relativity should also apply to values and moral judgments; anthropologists must suspend judgment of other cultures to understand those cultures.

III. Cultural relativity in many ways defines American anthropology and its contribution to society.

- A. The relativistic concept of culture is no longer confined to anthropology—it has been borrowed by other disciplines and entered popular discourse.
- B. As much as we may romanticize cultural relativity and sensitivity, such perspectives are not without their own moral pitfalls.
 1. Boas himself had to rethink cultural relativity in light of the Holocaust.
 2. Where do we draw the line? The case of female circumcision in parts of West Africa offers some suggestions.

Readings:

Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*.

Franz Boas, *Race, Language, and Culture*.

Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is it useful to conceive of *culture* in terms of evolution and progress? What does it mean to be a more advanced culture?
2. How has the Boasian perspective influenced definitions of culture?
3. What are the limits of cultural relativity?

Lecture Four

Fieldwork and the Anthropological Method

Scope: Anthropologists are drawn to the exotic otherness of distant locales, and no other place has held more romantic fascination for Western observers than the Pacific Islands. Two early anthropological pioneers, Bronislaw Malinowski and Margaret Mead, are particularly associated with Pacific studies. In 1915, Malinowski traveled to the Trobriand Islands off the coast of northern New Guinea, where he would live for two years. Documenting the Trobrianders' matrilineal kinship system, Malinowski challenged the universality of Freud's Oedipal theories, showing that tensions between father and son were nonexistent in Trobriand society. Margaret Mead, a student of Franz Boas, traveled to Samoa at the tender age of 23, to prove theories of cultural relativity. Like Malinowski, she found a much more sexually liberated culture with fewer conflicts between adolescents and their parents than was the case in the West. Mead's data have since been challenged, but recent research on the meaning of sex on Samoa partially vindicates her view.

Outline

- I. Cultural anthropology's primary methodological tool is participant observation—actually going and living with the people being studied to gain a more intimate understanding of their daily lives.
 - A. Extended fieldwork is a hallmark of modern cultural anthropology.
 - B. The process is often referred to as “doing ethnography,” which is documenting the lifeways of another culture in a sensitive fashion. Doing ethnography primarily involves participant observation and other forms of social science data collection.
 - C. Cultural anthropologists write their results in *ethnographies*, representations of other cultures.
- II. The greatest early champion of anthropological fieldwork was Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942).

- A. Born in what is today Poland, Malinowski studied at the University of Cracow, where he received his Ph.D. with the highest honors of the Austrian Empire.
 - 1. Malinowski went on to study in Germany and, finally, at the London School of Economics in its burgeoning anthropology department.
 - 2. At the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Malinowski was on his way to study a small group off the coast of New Guinea. As an enemy national in allied territory (via Australia), Malinowski was not allowed to travel back to Europe.
 - 3. Making a virtue of this necessity, Malinowski became the biggest proponent of conducting long-term fieldwork and participant observation.
- B. Malinowski ended up spending two years living among the Trobriand Islands off the east coast of New Guinea.
 - 1. Malinowski was struck by the matrilineal kinship system of the Trobrianders and the jockeying among chiefs for power.
 - 2. Malinowski was a prolific writer, and his oeuvre covers everything from marriage and sexuality to trade and subsistence goods.
 - 3. Malinowski shows why Trobrianders use magic in building long-distance canoes—to symbolically tame forces outside of their control—but not in building other sorts of canoes.
- C. Malinowski's view of culture was, like Boas's, fundamentally relativistic.
 - 1. He viewed cultures as integrated wholes, the parts of which all served a particular function.
 - 2. He disproved that native peoples were somehow irrational, showing that within their cultural contexts, natives act perfectly rationally.
 - 3. He argued against the universalizing of Freudian theories of the Oedipus complex, showing that the tensions between father and son did not hold true in the Trobriands.

III. Margaret Mead (1901–1978), a student of Franz Boas, conducted fieldwork in the Pacific islands not long after Malinowski. She went on to become the public face of anthropology in the last half of the century.

- A. A student of Franz Boas, Mead was driven by Boasian ideals.
 - 1. Like Boas, she saw the field as a laboratory to test social theories.
 - 2. Like Malinowski, she sought to disprove universal psychological theories. In their place, she proposed a Boasian relativity.
- B. In 1925, at age 23, Mead headed off to do fieldwork in Samoa. Her work would later be published in the best-selling *Coming of Age in Samoa*.
 - 1. Mead was attracted to the romantic view of Polynesia in the popular imagination.
 - 2. She spent a lot of time with adolescent girls and young women.
 - 3. She wrote about Samoans' adolescent sexual freedom.
 - 4. She used these data to argue against the Freudian notion of a conflict-ridden adolescence and contrasted the Samoans positively with contemporary U.S. culture.
- C. Mead's data were later attacked by Derek Freeman, an anthropologist who studied in Samoa in the 1940s.

IV. Modern definitions of culture tend to stress its dynamic, ever-changing nature.

- A. We generally conceive of culture as learned and shared, but it is shared to varying degrees.
- B. Culture is not so much a "thing" as a process, a text being written.
- C. Clifford Geertz sees culture as a text to be interpreted; Michael Herzfeld views cultural anthropology as the study of "common sense."

Readings:

Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*.

Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa*.

Michael Young, *Malinowski's Kiriwina*.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. What sorts of data can participant observation yield that other methodologies miss?

2. Why might the Pacific Islands hold such a fascination for Victorian-era Europeans?
3. Do Margaret Mead's critics negate her social observations, or do they still hold true?

Lecture Five

Nature, Nurture, and Human Behavior

Scope: Questions of nature versus nurture have intrigued thinkers throughout the ages. How much of who we are is determined by biology, and how much is learned culture? The relatively recent field of sociobiology (or evolutionary psychology) addresses these questions by looking for evolutionary origins for social behavior. Biologists have traditionally defined evolutionary “fitness” in terms of individuals—how long they live and how many offspring they produce. Sociobiologists shift the focus from individuals to genes. Stemming from studies of ants, bees, and other social insects, sociobiology sees individuals as simply containers for genes. This, in turn, allows them to show an evolutionary basis for altruism and nepotism.

Sociologists also study “attractiveness” from an evolutionary perspective. They argue that evolutionary pressures act differently on men than on women, producing different conceptions of what is considered attractive (most simply, that men value physical beauty and youthful appearance while women are more concerned with character and social status). Recent cross-cultural studies of conceptions of beauty, however, call into question the universality of sociological claims.

Outline

- I. To what extent is human behavior determined by nature and to what extent through nurture? This question has long plagued philosophers and social thinkers, and it gets to the heart of anthropology.
 - A. John Locke famously weighed in on the side of nurture with his *tabula rasa* idea of human development. Most cultural anthropologists today emphasize cultural development over biological determinism.
 - B. The case for biological determinism in human nature has a dubious past, associated with eugenics and racism. Shedding this taint, the field of sociobiology (or evolutionary psychology) has emerged to uncover genetic bases for human behavior.

- II.** Sociobiology builds on Darwin's theory of natural selection and advances in our understanding of genetics to redefine what is meant by evolutionary "fitness."
- A.** The synthetic approach to evolution combined Darwinian selection with Mendelian genetics and the discovery of DNA's structure.
 - B.** Sociobiology emerged in the mid-1970s, offering a new synthesis.
 - 1.** E. O. Wilson, on the basis of his work with social insects, put forth a comprehensive theory of the evolutionary bases of cooperation.
 - 2.** Richard Dawkins captured the core idea of sociobiology with his phrase "the selfish gene."
 - 3.** Sociobiologists point out that *Homo sapiens* evolved in a particular environment (the environment of evolutionary adaptation, or EEA), roughly corresponding to the Pleistocene period from 1.8 million to about 11,000 years ago. Early in the development of *Homo sapiens*, culture came to trump environmental pressures on evolution. Thus, our basic biological adaptation is to a Pleistocene environment.
 - C.** Sociobiologists base much of their theory on a reconceptualization of "fitness."
 - 1.** Fitness is generally considered to be an individual's direct success in reproducing.
 - 2.** Sociologists argue that we should look at humans as containers of genes—it is not so important if the individual survives or dies or reproduces, but how many of his or her genes get passed down to the next generation.
 - 3.** As genes are shared among related individuals, sociologists argue for the concept of "inclusive fitness," which takes into account the survival not only of individuals but of the genes they carry.
 - 4.** Thus, it sometimes makes evolutionary sense for individuals to sacrifice themselves for their relatives.
- III.** Sociobiologists have contributed to our understanding of altruism and reciprocity, reproductive strategies between the sexes, and the biological basis of attractiveness.
- A.** Dawkins's selfish genes ironically result in sociability. Altruism and reciprocity—the glue of social relations—actually provide a selective advantage to the genes of a person.

- B.** Sociobiologists have posited fundamentally different pressures at work on men and women in their reproductive strategies.
1. Humans pursue what is termed a *K strategy* of reproduction—having very few offspring but investing greatly in their care. This is made necessary by the long period of helplessness that characterizes human offspring.
 2. Using an economic metaphor, sociologists argue that sperm is in plentiful supply while eggs are in short supply. This results in men and women having different goals and strategies.
 3. This line of thought argues that men are looking for youth, fidelity, and health in women, while women look for material success and commitment in men.
- C.** Sociobiologists also study the biology of sexual attractiveness.
1. They argue that men prefer younger women to maximize childbearing potential, as well as a certain waist-to-hip ration that indicates childbearing potential.
 2. Nonetheless, a number of these traits seem to be specific to U.S. culture, calling into question the universal applicability of the theory.

Readings:

Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*.

Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape*.

E. O. Wilson, *On Human Nature*.

Robin Wright, *The Moral Animal*.

Questions to Consider:

1. To what extent is our behavior predetermined by our genes?
2. Do men and women have fundamentally different goals for marriage and mating?
3. Can “subjective” attractiveness be based in genetic predispositions?

Language, Thought, and Culture

Lecture Six

Languages, Dialects, and Social Categories

Scope: Language is an element of existence that makes us human: The fact that we have language, that we can communicate with each other, gives rise to culture and sets us apart from other animals. It is unclear when language first arose among our ancestors (perhaps as early as 300,000 or as recently as 100,000 years ago), but writing came along only about 6,000 years ago. All humans have a language, but languages vary greatly around the world. It seems that mental maps of a language's particular sounds are laid down early in life and are incredibly resilient; the older one becomes, the harder it is to master the phonology and grammar of another tongue. Linguists study how people communicate; this involves not just syntax and grammar, but also body language and facial expressions. The linguist Charles Hockett proposes a list of features that make human language unique. These include the ability to say totally new things and to talk about events not in the present. However, recent work with apes has shown that many capabilities we have thought were uniquely human are shared among higher primates.

Language certainly tells us a lot about the speaker, not just the words spoken but how they are said. Dialects, for example, are important markers of one's social origins, and a number of studies have shown that speaking a particular dialect calls into play a whole host of stereotypes and preconceptions.

Outline

- I. Humans are both united and divided by language.
 - A. Although spoken language has been around for at least 100,000 years, written languages are relatively recent.
 - B. Languages vary greatly in their particulars, but there are a few important common elements.
 1. All languages have a grammar (whether it is written or not) and are wholly functioning systems.

2. Languages are constantly changing.

II. Technical linguistics looks at the structures of languages.

- A. Spoken language is based on sounds, or *phonemes*.
- B. Written languages imperfectly represent phonemes.
 1. In logographic writing systems, symbols are used to represent units of meanings (and, sometimes, whole words).
 2. *Syllabic* and *alphabetic* systems combine a smaller number of symbols (“letters”) to represent the sounds of words.
- C. Phonemes are combined to create *morphemes* (the minimal units of meaning in a language); morphemes combine to create words; and words combine in a way prescribed by syntax and grammar.
 1. All languages have a grammar.
 2. Noam Chomsky has suggested that there is an innate capacity for the mind to produce grammar.
- D. Linguists have also discovered that a great deal of what we communicate occurs nonverbally.
 1. As much as 80 percent of the meaning conveyed in a conversation may come from body language (*kinesics*).
 2. *Proxemics* is the study of the physical distance between speakers, showing how notions of personal space vary between cultures.

III. The ability to produce language is a hallmark feature of the human condition, giving rise to the unique cognitive and cultural capabilities of the species.

- A. Most scientists agree that language is uniquely human, but there has been great disagreement on what exactly this means. The linguist Charles Hockett proposed a number of features that, combined, make language human.
 1. Language is an *open system*, as opposed to the closed call systems of other animals. This is to say that human language is infinitely variable, not confined to a few predetermined signals.
 2. Human language exhibits *displacement*, the ability to talk about the past, the future, and things not immediately present.
 3. The words used by human languages are arbitrary representations. This builds on Ferdinand de Saussure’s observation that a sign (such as a word) is composed of a

signifier (the combination of sounds that make up a word) and the *signified* (the actual object, idea, or person referred to).

- B.** Studies with apes have shown that with intensive training, apes can be taught rudimentary language skills.

1. The most famous “talking apes” are Washoe the chimp and Koko the gorilla. Both learned a variant of American Sign Language.
2. Washoe and Koko have proven that apes can use language productively; that they can discuss distant events (displacement); and that they can even lie (prevarication having been thought to be uniquely human).
3. Nonetheless, apes never reach beyond a two- to three-year level of language mastery, even after years of training.

- IV.** The language one speaks, and the way one speaks it, carries a good deal of information about one’s background and social class.

- A.** The linguist Max Weinreich famously defined a language as a dialect with a navy, meaning that language distinctions are politically loaded and often privilege dominant cultures.

1. A *dialect* is commonly defined as a mutually intelligible variety of a language, but often, it is difficult to know where exactly to draw the line.
2. As languages are not easily mastered, and dialects hard to eschew, the way one speaks acts as a good indicator of identity and class.

- B.** Different dialects carry different prestige values and are often used in the exercise of power.

1. In Spanish, French, German, and many languages, one uses two sets of pronouns, one familiar and the other more formal. Such pronouns require speakers to constantly acknowledge social distance in communication.
2. William Labov has studied the pronunciation of a final *r* following a vowel between social classes in New York City.
3. Speakers who have mastered two dialects often switch back and forth, depending on social context.
4. Controversies exist over how much a dialect should be valued, such as with black vernacular English (Ebonics) in the United States.

Readings:

Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language*.

Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct*.

Internet Resources:

<http://www.koko.org/>. The Gorilla Foundation.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does human language differ from animal call systems?
2. What does the use of a particular dialect tell us about the speaker?
3. What are the politics of dialect and language distinctions?

Lecture Seven

Language and Thought

Scope: Can you think of something that you cannot put into words? To what extent is thought determined by language? The linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf argues that linguistic structures actually determine the way we look at the world. He asserts that the way Hopi grammar treats verb tenses, for example, results in what whites perceive as a lackadaisical attitude toward time. In a similar vein, scholars have shown how American men and women speak subtly different varieties of English (resulting in much miscommunication) and how common metaphors in American English (such as “time is money”) shape the way we think about the world around us.

The way we talk to one another—our discourse strategies—shapes and reflects our social relationships. In this light, discourse analysis uncovers the often hidden power structures encoded in everyday speech.

Outline

- I. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis posits that language structures the way we look at the world.
 - A. Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897–1941), a part-time linguist and fire insurance investigator, conducted influential work to examine how language structures influence thought.
 - 1. In a wonderful piece titled “Blazing Icicles,” he shows how semantic misunderstandings led to a number of easily preventable fires.
 - 2. He also proposed that Hopi conceptions of time (not as linear and rigid as ours) have led to their characterization as “lazy Indians,” unable to keep to a schedule.
 - B. Whorf studied linguistics under Edward Sapir and took his inspiration from Sapir’s writings about language.
 - 1. The line of thought he developed has come to be known as the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis*, and it has two main variants.

2. The strong version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (or the linguistic determinism approach) posits that linguistic structures (vocabulary and grammar) determine the way one can think.
3. The weak version (or linguistic relativity) holds simply that linguistic categories and structures influence thought (and are, in turn, influenced by it).
4. The context in which languages arise necessitates certain vocabulary differences—Inuit have many words for *snow*; the Bedouins many words for *sand*.
5. In Mayan languages, certain numerical classifiers are grammatically required, which may influence worldview.

II. Research on metaphors and discourse strategies shows the real-world implications of language use.

- A. Recent research by linguist Deborah Tannen has found a number of gender-specific forms of speech.
 1. Women tend to speak more indirectly, asking rather than commanding and hedging many of their assertions.
 2. Such indirect speech is associated with women but often employed by men as well.
 3. Flight recorder data from a 1982 Air Florida crash shows how indirect speech may have devastating effects.
- B. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue, in *Metaphors We Live By*, that certain core metaphors in American English structure the way we think about the world.
 1. One key metaphor is “time is money,” in which time is treated as a valuable commodity, an object that can be spent, wasted, saved, invested, and so on.
 2. “Argument is war” is another salient metaphor that shapes the way we argue and think about argument.

III. Discourse analysis examines real speech as used in particular contexts. We all use—often unknowingly—a number of discourse strategies and shortcuts.

- A. But language is not simply enacting scripts—we use language actively and creatively. In this light, it is useful to look for broad strategies that individuals employ in their interactions.

- B.** Presuppositions are a powerful rhetorical tool and may be used to mark in-group versus out-group (with a private joke, for example) or establish social distance.
1. To save face, we often employ varieties of pre-invitations—subtly checking to see if an invitation would be accepted before proffering it (e.g., “What are you doing Saturday night?”).
 2. Examining turn-taking in a conversation can reveal a lot about the power dynamics between the individuals.

Readings:

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*.

Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*.

Benjamin Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How do men and women speak differently? Is this a serious barrier to communication?
2. How can the categories given by our language mold the way we think about things?
3. How much of our daily speech is scripted and how much is improvised?

Lecture Eight

Constructing Emotions and Identities

Scope: In going about our daily lives, we build mental models of the world around us, some highly individual, others more conventional. We are bombarded with so much information in the course of our daily lives that we need the shortcuts provided by mental models (for example, “high price equals high quality”) to survive. Mental models, even when they contradict scientific findings, are incredibly resilient, as seen in American folk beliefs about catching a cold from the weather and understanding how a thermostat works.

Often mental models are linguistically based, like scripts that we can enact in greetings and other routinized social settings. But mental models go beyond language to affect us physically. This is best seen in a variety of culturally specific mental illnesses found around the world, from “Arctic hysteria” to the Latin American “evil eye.” The anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes has shown how schizophrenia and maternal bonding—seemingly innate phenomena—are differently conceived across cultures. Even something as seemingly natural as gender varies significantly across cultures.

Outline

- I. Building on such linguistic research, a new subfield of cognitive anthropology has emerged.
 - A. Cognitive models are mental models of how the material and social world works. These may be idiosyncratic or widely shared.
 1. A number of key cognitive models are often set down early in life, through both formal and informal learning.
 2. At the same time, cognitive models are always dynamic and malleable, being formulated and adjusted to meet new circumstances and reconcile new information.
 - B. Idiosyncratic (or personal) models develop through one’s particular life history.

1. These include mental prototypes (of a car, dog, or house) and even the definitions of words.
 2. Most individuals have idiosyncratic cognitive maps of the areas in which they live.
- C. We term cognitive models that are widely shared *cultural models*. Indeed, a useful definition of *culture* is that it is composed of overlapping cognitive models.
1. Although certain models may be widely shared in a culture, there is never a perfect distribution.
 2. Notions of the American Dream are a cultural model.
- II. Cognitive models also affect us physically, in the way that we conceive of illness and the ways we express emotion.
- A. There are a number of documented culturally specific diseases, including Arctic hysteria, nervios, and the evil eye. Some of these are psychosomatic, but others are clearly biological ailments.
- B. In the United States, for example, we can see the impact of changing cultural notions of illness: the expansion of addiction theories, the explosion of diagnoses for attention deficit syndrome, and the recognition of post-traumatic stress syndrome.
- C. Anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes studied schizophrenia in Western Ireland in the mid-1970s. At the time, schizophrenia was associated with post-menopausal women in the United States, but in Ireland, it was almost entirely confined to young celibate men.
1. Scheper-Hughes worked in the pseudonymous village of Ballybran. The region suffered the effects of massive male migration to larger cities and abroad.
 2. As a result, many households became effectively matrilineal—held together by the mother. Scheper-Hughes argues that such social structure, combined with rigid Catholic teachings on the sinfulness of sexual pleasure, made it difficult for the young men who did not migrate to develop healthy heterosexual relations.
 3. Scheper-Hughes employed Thematic Apperception Tests (TATs) with both schizophrenic and “normal” males. Where the former saw sexual themes, the latter constructed elaborate stories with innocent plots.

4. Rates of schizophrenia decrease with the distance of migration from one's home village, but rates of alcoholism increase proportionately.
- D.** Scheper-Hughes went on to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in an impoverished shantytown community in northeastern Brazil, the Alto do Cruzeiro. There, she looked at the way mother-love is expressed.
1. The Alto do Cruzeiro suffers from extreme poverty and a high infant mortality rate.
 2. Scheper-Hughes showed that mothers in the Alto are very distant with their infants and show little emotion when one dies.
 3. She argues that this is not just an outward stance, but a reflection of the mother's true feelings. She argues that "mother-love" is basically a Western ideology that we have assumed is universal.

III. Just as illnesses and emotions are socially constructed, so, too, is gender, although here, there are more biological constraints.

- A.** Sex refers to the biological categories of male and female. *Gender* refers to the social categories associated with the sexes (femininity and masculinity).
1. All cultures recognize these two genders, although they assign different meanings to them.
 2. In some cultures, third genders are recognized, such as with the Berdache of the North American Plains Indians.
- B.** In Samoa, the fa'fa'fine are a recognized third gender.
1. Fa'fa'fines are boys who choose to dress and act like girls and are raised by their families as girls.
 2. Often misunderstood by Westerners as "gay" or "transvestites," the fa'fa'fines see themselves as fitting in an entirely different category.
- C.** Research has also shown that the widespread belief in erroneous cultural models can have real-world effects. This is seen in U.S. perceptions of how thermostats function.

Readings:

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping*.

———, *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics*.

Bradd Shore, *Culture in Mind*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is mother-love an innate emotion or something learned?
2. Why might different cultures show dramatically different rates of mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia?
3. What are some idiosyncratic mental models you hold? How do these compare to broader cultural models?

Lecture Nine

Magic, Religion, and Codes of Conduct

Scope: Anthropologists, when discussing spirituality (a belief in souls), often distinguish between *magic* and *religion*. Magical beliefs hold that humans can control natural and supernatural forces; that is, magical rites, if conducted properly, should have a desired practical result (such as making the rain come). Religion, in contrast, rests on the belief that humans are subjects of a higher power; rather than controlling the spiritual world, they must do its bidding and seek their desires through prayer and supplication. In practice, the distinction between religion and magic often breaks down.

In this lecture, we look to the Fulbe of northern Cameroon, a nominally Muslim culture with a rich tradition of magical beliefs. The Fulbe world is inhabited by cannibal witches, but it is the Islamic Mullam who has the power to cure their soul-eating illness. We see also how women are treated in this patriarchal system and the unexpected ways in which they are able to assert their power.

Outline

- I. All cultures have spiritual beliefs, although these vary greatly from society to society.
 - A. Edward Tylor, in his 1871 book *Primitive Cultures*, observed that a belief in souls (“animism”) is found in all cultures.
 - B. The distinction between magic and religion goes back to another early anthropologist, James Frazer, who wrote an encyclopedic survey of the world’s religions in *The Golden Bough* (1922).
 1. In his formulation, magic is directed toward immediate problems. It seeks to force supernatural powers to do one’s will in a sort of “primitive science.”
 2. Accusations of sorcery and witchcraft serve important social functions.
 - C. Religion is conceived as more conciliatory toward the supernatural, involving prayer and supplication to a higher power.

Religion is usually highly organized and revolves around group activities.

- II. The Fulbe of Domaayo in northern Cameroon illustrate how difficult it often is to distinguish between magic and religion.
 - A. The Fulbe are an ethnic group that lives across West Africa.
 - 1. There are some 8 to 10 million Fulbe peoples, who are also known as the Fulani. They all speak varieties of the language Fulfulde.
 - 2. The Fulbe are mostly Muslim, and they trace their origins to the *jihads* that expanded Islam to this part of Africa in the early 19th century.
 - 3. The Fulbe have a chiefdom system of traditional organization, but today, they all live under modern nation-states.
 - B. Domaayo is a small Fulbe town in northern Cameroon that has been studied by anthropologist Helen Regis.
 - 1. Cameroon—first a German, then a French colony—gained its independence in 1960.
 - 2. Domaayo (population about 1,000) is located far to the north, far from the capital and much of the country's political and economic life.
 - C. *Pulaaku* is the Fulbe code of conduct. It mandates stoicism, the withholding of emotion, and a clear deference to elders.
 - D. The Fulbe are farmers, but they see themselves more as cattle herders.
 - 1. Farmers mostly grow millet, which, served as porridge, is the staple of the local diet.
 - 2. But the Fulbe were historically cattle herders—and most still are although not in Domaayo. Fulbe culture tends to equate farmers with pagans because most farmers they come into contact with are not Muslim.
 - 3. Thus, for the Fulbe, the difference between farmers and herders is an important symbolic distinction, and given that they are not pagans, they must be herders.
 - 4. This provides evidence for Claude Lévi-Strauss's idea that humans tend to organize the world through binary oppositions, the most crucial of which is culture and nature.

- E. The Fulbe are a patrilineal society.
1. Men may have more than one wife, but all wives have to be cared for in good fashion. Men are required to supply their wives with annual gifts of cloth.
 2. Women are seen as potentially dangerous, and there is a fairly rigid segregation of the sexes. Men do not interact much with their wives.
 3. Divorce is not uncommon and may be initiated by either the husband or the wife. The average woman will be married 2.6 times in her lifetime.

III. Although Fulbe society is nominally Muslim, its members also maintain a dynamic indigenous tradition of magical beliefs.

- A. Virtually everyone in Domaayo self-identifies as Muslim, although some are recognized as being more pious than others.
1. *Mallum* is a term of respect bestowed upon a man who has read the whole Koran. Mallums serve as Koranic teachers and village elders. They also play important roles in native religious rituals and beliefs.
 2. Boys and girls are expected to attend Koranic schools, where they learn to read and write and memorize scripture. Girls, however, drop out by the time they are 12 or 13, while boys continue with their studies.
 3. It is too easy to lump together all of the Muslim world into a single culture area. The Fulbe practice just one of countless varieties of Islam practiced around the world.
 4. Indeed, the Fulbe are generally devout, especially in following the customs of daily prayers and celebrating holy days.
- B. The Fulbe do not restrict their spiritual beliefs to Islamic traditions. They also see the world as inhabited by malevolent spirits that must be averted with magic. Children are especially vulnerable to spiritual illnesses.
1. Looking at a child with an envious eye can actually cause deadly physical illness for the child. Therefore, adults treat their children with what seems to foreigners as a distant nonchalance.
 2. Children are also given protective amulets to wear; these may contain magical talismans and written verses from the Koran.

3. A pregnant woman should avoid looking at a lizard or her child might have a wasting disease. If a pregnant woman looks at an antelope, however, the child may take on the long, graceful features that the Fulbe see as an ideal of beauty.
- C. The scariest creature in the Fulbe pantheon of demons is the cannibal witch.
1. Cannibal witches eat the intestines and souls of their victims, who in turn, become cannibal witches.
 2. The Fulbe prize meat, which they feel they do not get enough of. It is also said that human flesh is the best in the world. Thus, the image of the cannibal witch, while it is feared, is also understood.
 3. Too much desire (which goes against the code of *pulaaku*) is dangerous. The desire for meat brings one dangerously close to being a cannibal witch.
- D. Women have a wide range of their own medicinal magic, including birth-control potions. They are especially vulnerable to the river spirits, because they often go alone to fetch water. Attacks from river spirits must be treated by a Mallum, or a woman could die.

Readings:

Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*.

Helen Regis, *The Fulbe of Northern Cameroon*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What social functions do witchcraft beliefs and accusations serve in other cultures?
2. How do the Fulbe reconcile their Muslim faith with their magic practices?
3. How do stories of river spirits convey Fulbe perceptions of white people?

Life Stages and the Family

Lecture Ten

Rites of Passage

Scope: Most cultures around the world mark significant stages in the life cycle with rituals and celebrations. The most important of these rites of passage is when girls and boys become women and men. Such coming-of-age ceremonies are marked by a separation from the group, a transitional period in which normal social strictures are suspended, and a reintegration into the community as adults.

For Fulbe boys, the initiation ceremony occurs when they are between 7 and 12 years old. During a several-week-long “circumcision camp,” boys are taken from their mothers, made to eat food considered unclean by Muslim practice to the point of vomiting, and physically pushed to the point of exhaustion—all the while being socialized in the stoic Fulbe code of manly behavior. Once they are circumcised, they reenter their communities as adult men.

A similar ceremony is performed by the Sambia of New Guinea, a culture marked by strong divisions between men and women. Among the Sambia, initiated boys will go to live in a communal men’s house until they get married and have their first child; women, during their menstrual period, must stay in a menstrual hut outside the village. The Sambia believe that boys are born without semen and, thus, without manhood. During their initiation, boys are required to engage in ritualized homosexual behaviors in order to build up their manhood. We will see how these rituals relate back to Sambia origin myths and Freudian theories of development.

Outline

- I. Every culture around the world recognizes important stages in the life cycle.
 - A. Arnold van Gennep in his pioneering *Rites of Passage* (1909) proposed a sequence for rite-of-passage ceremonies that holds well for many cultures.

- B. First, there is a separation of initiates from their families and the group.
 - 1. During the ceremonial transition period, normal rules are often turned upside down. Victor Turner calls this a period of *liminality*, and notes that it produces a sense of bonding (or *communitas*) between the initiates.
 - 2. Finally, the initiates are reintegrated into the society.

II. Male rites of passage among the Fulbe illustrate van Genep's model.

- A. Fulbe boys must be made into men through an initiation ceremony that culminates in their circumcision.
 - 1. During this ritual, they are instilled with the stoic principles of *pulaaku*.
 - 2. Before their initiation, boys have not had much contact with their fathers.
- B. The circumcision camp takes place when there is an adequate number of boys from about 7 to about 12 years old.
 - 1. The boys are separated from the village and taken to a makeshift camp on the far side of the river.
 - 2. The camp lasts only a few weeks but produces lifetime bonding among the boys and serves as an important symbolic break with the world of women.
- C. During the circumcision camp, the boys enter a stage of liminality where the normal rules that govern everyday life do not apply.
 - 1. They are made to eat road kill and other unclean foods. They are also made to eat excessively, to the point that they vomit.
 - 2. The boys endure physical hardships and punishments and are, finally, circumcised.
- D. The coming-in ceremony for the boys' return is an unusually festive time for the normally reserved Fulbe.
 - 1. A huge feast is thrown.
 - 2. The boys are paraded around as if they were sex objects, and the girls eye them with lust—behaviors that would ordinarily be severely punished.

III. The Fulbe mark four important phases in a woman's life.

- A. First is the status of "virgin," which lasts from birth until marriage. A virgin is not yet fully a woman.

- B. After marriage, sometime between the ages of 12 and 14, a girl takes on the status of a married woman and is then considered to be a real woman.
 - C. After a divorce, a woman enters a liminal period and is known as a “free woman” until she marries again. Free women are seen as potentially dangerous because they have no man to control their sexuality.
 - D. After menopause, “old women” become more assertive and enjoy many more freedoms. They are no longer feared by men for their sexuality.
- IV. The Sambia of Papua, New Guinea, also practice a dramatic coming-of-age ceremony for males.
- A. The Sambia, like the Fulbe, are a patrilineal society with a clear segregation between the sexes.
 - 1. Sambian communities have men’s houses on the edge of the village. Women are not allowed to enter these houses.
 - 2. There are also menstrual huts located outside the village, where women must go during their periods.
 - 3. Houses are clearly divided between the men’s side and the women’s side, and there are even separate male and female paths through the villages.
 - B. Boys are raised by their mothers until about age 7. They are seen as being potentially polluted and debilitated by such close contact with women and, thus, must be made into men through a series of rituals that will last until their first child is born, usually in their early 20s.
 - 1. Boys are not believed to be born with a supply of semen, which is closely linked to male virility. They are, thus, initiated by ingesting semen from older boys.
 - 2. This initiation reenacts the Sambian myth of Numboolyu and Chemchi, the two original beings, and provides an unusual resolution to the Oedipus complex.
 - 3. After the ritualized homosexual phase of initiation, adolescents are expected to marry women.
 - C. The prolonged Sambian initiation process makes men suspicious and fearful of women. They often have difficulty moving from the men’s hut and adjusting to living with their wives.

Readings:

Thomas Gregor, *Anxious Pleasures*.

Gilbert Herdt, *The Sambia*.

Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What rights of passage are important in our own culture? What functions do these serve?
2. How do the conditions of Fulbe initiation forge bonds between the boys?
3. Why are severe male initiation rites associated with antagonistic relations between the sexes?

Lecture Eleven

Family, Marriage, and Incest

Scope: All cultures practice some form of marriage, if we define marriage rather broadly. Arrangement marriages are the norm around the world, with romantic love seen as a weak basis for a lifetime partnership. The most casual form of marriage comes from the Nayar of India, where women have a number of “visiting” husbands,” yet even here males are required to publicly recognize their relationships and claim paternity for their children. Many cultures favor cousin marriages—making children marry outside of the immediate family, but not too far outside that family relations get diluted. Nonetheless, even among cultures with such marriage rules, in practice we find a degree of flexibility in choosing a spouse.

In a majority of cultures, men may have more than one wife, although usually it is a small percentage of males who can afford to support multiple wives. About 15% of cultures practice monogamy, or serial monogamy, as is the case in the West. The rarest form of marriage (found in only six cultures) is polyandry, where a woman has more than one husband. Polyandrous marriages are generally found in extreme environments (for example, on the Himalayan highlands of Nepal), where it is advantageous to limit population growth.

While romantic love is often not seen as a valid basis for marriage, it is found in virtually all cultures. All cultures also enforce a prohibition on incest—the fundamental restrictions on whom one may marry. We find that the range of what are considered incestuous relations varies significantly.

Outline

- I. In less complex societies, kinship serves as the basis for economic, political, and other social roles.
 - A. There are two primary types of kinship relations, *consanguines* (blood relatives) and *affines* (in-laws). These are biological and legal relations, but their significance is culturally constructed.

- B. Descent is the intergenerational relationship between consanguines. Descent groups serve important social functions but vary in size and composition.
 - 1. *Lineages* are groups of consanguines who can trace their relationships back to a known common ancestor.
 - 2. *Clans* are groups of lineages that claim common descent from a mythical ancestor.
- II. There are three main forms of descent groups: patrilineal, matrilineal, and cognatic. These determine paths of inheritance, as well as social roles in society.
- A. About 40 percent of all societies practice patrilineal descent, in which relations are traced through male lines.
 - 1. Patrilineal descent is associated with patriarchal societies. Even where the ideology of male dominance is muted, however, women in patrilineal systems often live their lives as outsiders.
 - 2. In a patrilineal system, one simply does not feel related to one's mother and her family as one does with the father's side of the family. Sisters are members of their father's patrilineage, but their children belong to their husband's patrilineage.
 - B. Matrilineal systems are much rarer, found in only about 15 percent of all societies.
 - C. The most common form of descent is cognatic descent, in which relationships are traced through both male and female lines. About 45 percent of all societies practice cognatic descent.
 - 1. Cognatic descent is associated with mobility and is, generally, a much more flexible system. It is practiced in most modern Western cultures, as well as in smaller-scale societies around the world.
 - 2. The Dobe Ju/'hoansi, a nomadic band-level society in the Kalahari region of southern Africa, practice cognatic descent, which helps them maintain large networks of kin to call on in times of need.

- III.** Monogamy is relatively rare cross-culturally. Most cultures allow men to have multiple wives, and a very few permit multiple husbands.
- A.** About 82 percent of societies allow polygyny, the marriage of one man to multiple women.
 - 1. Having multiple wives is a sign of wealth and prestige.
 - 2. There are also clear political and economic benefits to having more than one wife.
 - 3. Trobriand chiefs strategically marry a number of wives from different lineages in order to increase their political networks.
 - B.** There have only been about five reported cases of societies that are polyandrous, with women having more than one husband.
 - 1. Polyandry appears to emerge in harsh physical circumstances with extremely limited resources and a need for low population growth.
 - 2. Tibetans in Nepal practice fraternal polyandry, in which brothers will marry a single wife. This prevents family lands from being broken up.
- IV.** Marriage, in some form or another, is found in all cultures.
- A.** Evolutionarily, human beings are predisposed to pair-bonding. Given the incredible helplessness of human infants, it has, until recently, been a biological imperative to have two caregivers.
 - B.** Most Americans marry for love, although this is the exception rather than the rule around the world.
 - 1. Some historians and social scientists believe that the notion of romantic love is a Western ideology first developed by 12th-century French troubadours.
 - 2. A survey I conducted of 166 cultures found some form of romantic love in all of them. Perhaps, then, some have speculated, there may be a biological predisposition to falling in love.
 - C.** Although pair-bonding may be universal, the precise form of marriage varies greatly. The most extreme example comes from the Nayar of southern India, who practice two types of marriage.
 - 1. When girls reach their early teenage years there, they participate in *tali-rite marriages*. The couple will cohabitate for only a few days or weeks, and the marriage may or may

not be consummated. Few obligations follow this initial ceremonial period.

2. Women then enter into multiple *sandbadham marriages*. These are fairly casual unions; the couples do not live together, and a woman may maintain any number of these relationships at one time. Despite this openness, when a child is born, it is crucial that a man claim paternity.

V. Even though romantic love appears to be a cultural universal, arranged marriages are by far the norm in societies around the world.

VI. Just as marriage is found in all cultures, so too are restrictions on whom one can marry. Incest taboos may appear as a sort of natural law, but their precise formulation varies from culture to culture.

- A. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, incest rules go back to prohibitions spelled out in Leviticus. These were greatly expanded by the Catholic Church in the 12th century.
- B. Incest taboos may have a biological basis in that they avoid the ill effects of recessive genetic traits, although inbreeding would also have weeded out such traits over the long term.
- C. Edward Westermarck argued that familiarity breeds contempt and, thus, that children raised together would lose sexual passion for one another. Several studies seem to bear out his hypothesis.
 1. On *kibbutzim* in Israel where children were raised together, virtually no members of the same cohort married one another.
 2. Very poor Chinese families sometimes practice infant betrothal with their daughters in what are called *sim-pua marriages*; the future husband and wife grow up together in the same manner as siblings. These marriages have low fertility rates and high divorce rates.

Readings:

Helen Fisher, *Anatomy of Love: A Natural History of Mating*.

Melvyn C. Goldstein, "When Brothers Share a Wife," *Natural History*, March 1987, pp. 39–48.

Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*.

Yolanda Murphy and Robert Murphy, *Women of the Forest*.

Arthur Wolf, *Sexual Attraction and Childhood Association*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What evolutionary pressure would promote pair-bonding?
2. Is incest a natural aversion or is it learned?
3. Why is polygyny so common and polyandry so rare around the world?

Lecture Twelve

Multiple Spouses and Matrilineality

Scope: Matrilineal and patrilineal societies often distinguish between different types of “uncles,” “aunts,” and “cousins.” For example, we call our mother’s sister “aunt” while many matrilineal societies would refer to her as “mother.” Likewise, cousins are distinguished as “cross” (children of opposite sex siblings) or “parallel” (children of same-sex siblings, and thus members of the same lineage).

In this lecture we return to the Trobriand Islands to look at how matrilineality affects social, political, and economic relationships. We find that among the Trobrianders, the brother-sister bond far eclipses the husband-wife tie, and that a boy will inherit his position in society from his maternal uncle (his mother’s brother) rather than his biological father. This leads to conflict not between father and son (as Freud would hypothesize) but between nephew (sister’s son) and uncle (mother’s brother), leading Malinowski to proclaim that the so-called Oedipus complex was not about sex but about resisting authority.

As in all matrilineal societies, men hold the formal positions of power, and the Trobrianders have a highly stratified social order based on one’s matrilineage and clan membership. Children are expected to practice clan exogamy, and a young woman’s ideal marriage partner would be her mother’s brother’s son—although in practice it seems that young people have a great deal of flexibility in choosing their husbands and wives. At funeral ceremonies, elaborate networks of kin come together to publicly display their ties and obligations to one another.

Outline

- I. The Trobriand Islanders were studied by Bronislaw Malinowski and Annette Weiner.
 - A. The Trobriand Islanders have a matrilineal kinship system and a political structure led by hereditary chiefs.

1. Trobriand chiefs are always men; they inherit their positions, however, not from their fathers but from their mothers' brothers (that is, their matrilineal relatives).
 2. Fathers provide important symbols of paternity to their children.
 3. Brother-sister ties are much stronger than husband-wife ties.
- B.** Trobriand origin myths tell of four pairs of brothers and sisters who came up from the underworld to start modern society.
1. Trobrianders have four major clans that are descended from these original ancestors: the Pigs, the Dogs, the Crocodiles, and the Iguanas.
 2. These clans are ranked in a hierarchy of prestige. Each is made up of a number of lineages, which themselves are ranked.
- II.** Every person is born a member of his or her mother's clan and will have to marry outside of that clan.
- A.** Across cultures, love is often seen as a fragile basis on which to build a lifetime partnership. In this light, parents feel best suited to pick out marriage partners for their children.
- B.** One often preferred marriage partner is one's cross-cousin.
1. *Cross-cousins* are children of opposite-sex siblings (for example, one's mother's brother's children). *Parallel cousins* are children of same-sex siblings (for example, one's mother's sister's children).
 2. Among the Trobriand Islanders, a young man's father's sister's daughter (a cross-cousin) is the preferred marriage partner, although, in fact, men often end up marrying someone else.
- C.** For future chiefs and lineage leaders, married couples prefer to live in the husband's mother's brother's hamlet.
- D.** Malinowski argued that Trobriand boys have tense relationships with their mothers' brothers, not with their fathers, arguing that Freud's Oedipus complex was more about power than sex.
- III.** Trobriand kinship ties are especially important during the rituals conducted at funerals.

- A. The Trobrianders believe that a dead person's soul travels to the primordial island over the horizon, where it is reborn and travels back to impregnate a woman of the same clan.
- B. The Trobrianders believe that no death is accidental, and, thus, a dead person's spouse's kin must demonstrate their innocence and sorrow at the loss by organizing and performing the funeral rituals.
- C. In turn, the deceased's matrilineal kin compensate his wife's kin with payments of woven skirts, yams, and banana-leaf bundles.

Readings:

Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Sexual Lives of Savages*.

Annette Weiner, *The Trobriand Islanders*.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. How does Trobriand matrilineality refute Freud's Oedipus complex?
- 2. Why is it preferred in some societies to marry one's cousin?

Bands, Tribes, and Chiefdoms

Lecture Thirteen

Gatherers and Hunters

Scope: Anthropologists often categorize human societies in terms of social complexity, from bands and tribes to chiefdoms and states. Today, about a quarter million people live in band-level societies, subsisting mainly from gathering wild plants and hunting. Yet, in the great scheme of human history, this was the most common form of social organization.

Bands of the Dobe Ju/'hoansi of the southern Kalahari Desert in Africa are one of the most studied groups in history. Despite the sense imparted by the popular label of *hunters and gatherers*, anthropologists have shown that the Dobe get about 70 percent of their food from gathering roots, nuts, and berries; only about 30 percent of their calories come from hunting. Further, we find that the Dobe place very little value on private property and spend only about 20 hours a week working. Thus, although bands live what may seem an extremely impoverished existence, from another angle, they enjoy greater food security and more leisure time than the affluent societies of the West.

Outline

- I. Although the evolutionary schemes of the 19th century have been discredited, there remains something useful in categorizing societies based on their social complexity.
 - A. In an influential 1962 work, *Primitive Social Organization: An Evolutionary Perspective*, Elvin Service proposed a typology of societies composed of bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states.
 - B. *Bands* are nomadic food gatherers with no institutionalized political structure.
 1. Bands are normally composed of 25 to 50 related individuals and practice a flexible cognatic form of kinship.
 2. Bands subsist from gathering foods and hunting game. There is very little specialization, private property is not generally recognized, and leadership is situational.

- C. *Tribes* are larger than bands, numbering from a few hundred to a few thousand individuals.
 - 1. The higher population densities of tribes are supported by horticultural production (low-intensity farming).
 - 2. Tribal-level societies, such as the Yānomamö, have some status differences, but these are generally fluid; social organization is governed by kinship ties.
 - 3. Tribes are led by *headmen*, whose position is based on *achieved status*, the recognition of accomplishments, rather than inherited status.
 - D. *Chiefdoms* are larger than tribes, often with several settlements inhabited by thousands of individuals.
 - 1. In chiefdoms, such as the Trobriand Islands, status differences are institutionalized and important. Often, lineages are ranked.
 - 2. The status of chiefs is based on *ascribed authority*, or inherited position.
 - E. *States* are the largest and most complex form of social organization. States are marked by centralized authority, with a standing army or police to enforce order.
 - 1. All of the world's remaining bands, tribes, and chiefdoms are today subsumed under state organizations.
 - 2. Today, we speak of these peoples in terms of ethnic groups.
- II. The Dobe Ju/'hoansi are the archetypal band-level society and one of the most well documented groups in the anthropological literature.
- A. A "bushman" peoples of the southern Kalahari, the Dobe (also known as the !Kung San) speak a San "click" language.
 - 1. About 50,000 Dobe individuals are living today in Botswana and Namibia.
 - 2. Richard Lee and Irven DeVore have led a large-scale ethnographic project there since 1963.
 - B. The Dobe are a band-level society.
 - 1. Leadership is situational, although elders are accorded special respect.
 - 2. The Dobe are nomadic, following seasonal fruits, nuts, roots, and game. Water is always a concern, and each band will have a number of water holes to which it migrates.
 - 3. Some Dobe men practice polygyny, but Dobe marriages in general are marked by a high divorce rate.

- C. We have long termed bands as hunters and gatherers, but research shows that gathering is more important than hunting in terms of caloric intake, if not social prestige.
 - 1. Dobe women are the primary foragers and provide about 70 percent of the total calories consumed by a band. Mongongo nuts are a Dobe staple.
 - 2. Although meat provides only about 30 percent of the caloric intake, it is highly valued. Men hunt giraffe, wildebeest, antelope, warthog, and other game.
- D. Band-level societies are notable for their fierce egalitarian ethic. There are few status distinctions, and these are limited to age (the opinion of elders is respected) and situational leadership.
 - 1. When a hunter makes a kill, he must distribute the meat among all in his band. To mute any ego building that might threaten the band's egalitarian ethic, gifts of meat are met with insults about the quantity and quality offered.
 - 2. Beyond the gender division of labor, there is virtually no specialization in band-level societies.

III. Band-level societies, such as the Dobe, are often portrayed as the most impoverished of societies. However, anthropologist Marshall Sahlins argues that, depending on the criteria used, bands are, in many ways, more affluent than industrial societies.

- A. Within bands, there is usually very little sense of private property, and goods are freely borrowed without even asking.
 - 1. The lack of economic specialization means that almost everyone can make almost every item.
 - 2. Because bands are nomadic, having many personal possessions is maladaptive.
- B. In contrast to industrialized countries, no one in a band-level society goes hungry except in the most extreme circumstances.
- C. Sahlins argues that affluence may be achieved in two ways: (1) by wanting a lot and producing a lot or (2) by wanting little and, thus, being satisfied with little. He calls the latter the "Zen road to affluence."
 - 1. The Dobe work, on average, about 20 hours per week. In 2 hours of Mongongo nut collecting, a woman can harvest enough to feed her family for several days.

2. If affluence is measured in leisure time, then band-level societies are the most affluent in the world.

Readings:

Richard Lee, *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*.

Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*.

Majorie Soshtak, *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*.

Film:

Jamie Uys, *The Gods Must Be Crazy*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is affluence? Are the Dobe more affluent than the average American?
2. Why is an egalitarian ethic so important to a band-level society?
3. What holds Dobe bands together in the absence of strong political leadership?

Lecture Fourteen

Headmen and Horticulturists

Scope: The Yānomamö are a tribal-level society living in the Amazon rainforest in northern Brazil and southern Venezuela. Based on the work of anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon, the Yānomamö have become famous as “the fierce people.” As is characteristic of tribal societies, the Yānomamö have headmen in their villages, although these figures must lead by example and persuasion rather than exercising the power to command.

The Yānomamö live in a world filled with malevolent spirits and demons. They divide the cosmos into four layers, and demons from the underworld roam Yānomamö territory in search of souls to consume. Yānomamö shamans maintain contact with the spirits of the other layers of the cosmos and are called on to exorcise spirits from afflicted individuals.

Outline

- I. The Yānomamö comprise a classic case study in anthropology.
 - A. The Yānomamö live in the northern region of Amazonia, along the border of Brazil and Venezuela.
 1. The Amazon River competes with the Nile for title of the world’s largest river—the Nile is a bit longer, but the Amazon has more volume.
 2. The Amazon rainforest—roughly the drainage basin on the Amazon River—has a rich yet delicate ecosystem. It holds a large percentage of the world’s biodiversity, yet its sandy soils are ill suited for large-scale agriculture.
 3. It was long assumed that the Amazon could not support the population densities for large-scale and complex societies to emerge, although recent archaeological evidence suggests that intensive agriculture may have been practiced some 4,000 years ago.

- B. The Yānomamö live in the basin of the Orinoco River.
 - 1. About 22,000 people live in more than 200 scattered villages. When a village gets too large, it will fission into two smaller villages.
 - 2. Yānomamö villages are called *shabonos*, large circular structures surrounded by palisades and with a large open-air plaza in the middle.
- C. Napoleon Chagnon began his fieldwork with the Yānomamö in 1964. He was impressed by the fierceness and enforced egalitarianism of the Yānomamö.

II. The Yānomamö are a tribal-level society.

- A. Political leadership is based on achieved status. Headmen have some authority but very little power to make others act.
- B. The Yānomamö practice slash-and-burn (or *swidden*) horticulture.
 - 1. Their primary crops are plantains, manioc, taro, sweet potato, and tobacco. The Yānomamö also hunt pigs, monkey, deer, and armadillos.
 - 2. The Yānomamö shift their fields about every three years. Conventional wisdom argues that this is the result of poor soil quality, but the Yānomamö themselves say it is because they get tired of weeding.
 - 3. Like the Dobe, the Yānomamö work much less than people in modern Western societies.
- C. The Yānomamö are a patrilineal society with often tense relations between the sexes.
 - 1. The ideal marriage partner for the Yānomamö is one's cross-cousin, although exceptions are often made.
 - 2. Men may have more than one wife, and this is most common for headmen.
 - 3. Males see women as weak and potentially polluting. Domestic violence is common.

III. The Yānomamö live in a world filled with spirits—mostly malevolent forces with which they must contend.

- A. The Yānomamö cosmos is divided into four layers.
 - 1. The very top layer is uninhabited today but is where the first beings lived. Below is the sky layer, which contains the Yānomamö versions of heaven and hell.

2. The third layer is the present earth. The bottom layer is an underworld filled with cannibalistic spirits.
- B. The architecture of the Yānomamō village *shabono* reflects the meeting of the sky, earth, and underworld layers of the cosmos.
 1. The Yānomamō make a clear distinction between “things of the village” and “things of the forest.”
 2. The spirit demon Titiri lives at the low end of the *shabono*.
- C. The Yānomamō believe humans possess several types of souls.
 1. The “will” soul leaves the body at death, climbing up the hammock rope to the sky layer.
 2. Another soul leaves the body to become a mischievous, if not malevolent, jungle spirit.
 3. The liver soul is vulnerable to being stolen or cannibalized by *hekura* and other spirits. This may result in physical illness and even death.
 4. Finally, humans all have a spirit-double soul (a *nahual*), and the fate of an individual is linked to that of his totemic animal.
- D. Yānomamō shamans serve as mediators between the spirit world and the material world and are called upon to heal spiritual illnesses.
 1. Shamans’ power resides with the ability to attract *hekura* spirits (who inhabit their livers) and tame them as much as possible to do their bidding.
 2. *Hekura* are microscopic, unearthly beautiful spirits that come from the underworld.
 3. Shamans inhale a hallucinogenic snuff and smoke massive quantities of tobacco, entering into trance-like states in which they can see and communicate with the spirits hidden to the normal eye.

Readings:

Napoleon Chagnon, *The Yānomamō*.

Florinda Donner, *Shabono*.

Jacques Lizot, *Tales of the Yanomami*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How do Yanomamö headmen substitute moral authority for coercive force in their political leadership?
2. How does *shabono* architecture illustrate Yanomamö cosmology?
3. Are spirit-induced illnesses “real” sicknesses?

Lecture Fifteen

Cannibalism and Violence

Scope: After death, Yānomamö souls travel to the heavens while their bodies are cremated and the ashes eaten by relatives. Such ritualized cannibalism ensures the rejuvenation of Yānomamö society.

The Yānomamö have a reputation for being one of the most violent societies known. The most common cause of death for adult males is by far murder, and fierceness is a highly valued cultural trait. Yānomamö villages are enmeshed in constantly shifting alliances, and raids and warfare between villages are facts of daily life. Yānomamö men who have killed another man are called *unokais*, a designation of high status in what is basically an egalitarian culture. *Unokais* have more wives and more children than less fierce men, and thus, the pattern of fierceness is widely reproduced through family structure. Some anthropologists argue that Yānomamö warfare is caused by chronic shortages of protein and resulting fights over hunting grounds. The Yānomamö themselves say that although they like meat, they like women better and the true reason they go to war is to capture more wives.

Outline

- I. Yānomamö society is violent by almost any measure, and the Yānomamö place a high value on fierceness (*waiteri*).
 - A. Yānomamö fierceness can be traced back to the mythical origin of their society.
 1. The story of “Moonblood” tells of a primordial village of supernatural humans. After the cremation of one of these beings, the moon stole the ashes waiting to be consumed. The villagers shot the moon, and where the blood puddled arose Yānomamö society.
 2. The moon blood is associated with *waiteri*. Neighboring peoples are said to have been formed from lesser puddles of moon blood and are, thus, inherently weaker.

- B.** The Yānomamö practice a form of cannibalism as part of their funeral rituals.
1. For the Yānomamö, death is intimately tied to rebirth. From their dead fields of plantains and manioc comes new growth. And by ingesting ancestors, one may ensure the continuation of the lineage.
 2. The Yānomamö practice endocannibalism (eating one's own people) as opposed to exocannibalism (eating one's enemy). Nor is theirs a gruesome caricature of cannibalism: They merely mix some of the ground-up ashes of cremated bones in with a gruel and eat it.
 3. Anthropologist Beth Conklin has written on cannibalism among the Wari of Brazil, who eat the roasted flesh of their deceased as a form of compassion.

II. The Yānomamö are known as an especially violent society.

- A.** Yānomamö violence varies in its intensity and frequency, ranging from hitting a spouse or child to all-out warfare.
1. Disputes between men arise over women, accusations of theft, stinginess, and other such causes.
 2. Disputes begin with verbal arguments and may escalate into chest-pounding duels, in which fighters take turns beating the other's chest until one backs down.
 3. When such duels escalate further, participants arm themselves with clubs or axes, with the intention of inflicting grievous bodily harm.
 4. When a death does occur, the deceased's relatives are honor-bound to avenge his murder. Such revenge is generally carried out in clandestine raids on the enemy village to kill the murderer or one of his relatives.
 5. When such raids escalate back and forth, all-out war may follow in which one village tries to destroy the *shabono* and fields of its enemy.
- B.** With their frequent wars, Yānomamö villages must maintain an ever-shifting web of alliances with other villages.
1. Allies can be called on to fight a common enemy that threatens one village.
 2. They also provide an economic safety net in cases of crop failure or fields burned by an enemy.

3. Alliances are established and maintained through periodic reciprocal feasts in which one village hosts another over several days. The balanced reciprocity of the feasting system is a key organizational principle of Yąnomamö society.

III. The question of why the Yąnomamö go to war has been hotly disputed.

- A. A sociobiological perspective highlights the fact that Yąnomamö men who have killed another are accorded special respect.
 1. All killers go through a cleaning ritual and are then given the prestigious status of an *unokais*.
 2. A *unokais* has, on average, 2.5 times more wives and 3 times more children than non-killers.
 3. Thus, killing ensures reproductive success and, it is argued, through a combination of genetic predisposition and family context, violence comes to dominate the society.
- B. Marvin Harris and others have argued that warfare among not only the Yąnomamö but many peoples is based in protein shortages.
 1. Harris and Michael Harner argued that the Aztecs practiced war and exocannibalism to supply protein to their capital city.
 2. Harris argues that the Yąnomamö have chronic protein shortages and that war between villages creates a no-man's land between them that acts as a natural preserve to maintain supplies of game.
- C. Chagnon argues that war is not about protein but another scarce resource: women.
 1. Protein intakes vary from village to village, but the overall average is well above the minimum need. Further, high-protein villages fight as much as low-protein villages.
 2. The Yąnomamö themselves say that they fight mostly over women.
- D. Patrick Tierney and others argue that the Yąnomamö are not as violent as Chagnon suggests and that Chagnon himself incited much of the violence he documented. These accusations bring up difficult ethical conundrums for anthropologists.

Readings:

Beth Conklin, *Consuming Grief*.

Marvin Harris, *Cannibals and Kings: Origins of Culture*.

Patrick Tierney, *Darkness in El Dorado*.

Film:

Timothy Asch, *The Ax Fight*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does cannibalism fit into the spiritual beliefs of the Yanomamö and the Wari?
2. What are the ethical implications of Chagnon's fieldwork style? Did he take advantage of the Yanomamö?
3. Regarding the causes of war, is the more convincing argument for meat or women?
4. Are the Yanomamö more aggressive than we are, or do they just have different means of channeling disputes?

Lecture Sixteen

The Role of Reciprocity

Scope: The Inuit say, “Gifts make friends as surely as whips make dogs.” Indeed, this is one of those rare cultural observations that holds true around the world, not only for the Inuit of the Arctic region but also for the Trobriand Islanders of the western Pacific, for the Kalahari Bushmen of southern Africa, and for our own culture as well.

Among many societies, reciprocity forms the very basis of the economic system. For the Dobe, all economic activity is based on reciprocity. In the Trobriand Islands, chiefs exchange symbolic valuables over long distances in a system known as the *kula* ring. In the *kula* ring, armbands travel only counterclockwise around the string of islands, while necklaces travel clockwise. Through trading in these valuables, chiefs are able to maintain and expand their political influence. Even in our own society, reciprocity oils the wheels of daily interaction.

Outline

- I. Reciprocity and gift-giving are types of economic transactions that are intimately tied to cultural understandings. Reciprocity is found in all cultures, but in many smaller scale societies, it dominates economic interactions.
 - A. Karl Polanyi divides economic transactions into three main types: reciprocity, redistribution, and market exchange.
 - B. *Reciprocity* is the act of giving and receiving gifts; it solidifies social relationships and involves not only economic but also political and religious significance.
 - 1. The French sociologist/anthropologist Marcel Mauss, in his classic *The Gift* (1924), calls gift-giving a “total social phenomenon,” an implicit social contract that holds small-scale societies together in the absence of contractual law.
 - 2. Mauss offered the case of the Maori of New Zealand and the spiritual quality they call *hau*. Gifts are endowed with *hau*, a spiritual quality that comes from the spirits of the forest and

that must eventually retrace the circuit of exchange to return to their forest home.

C. Marshall Sahlins, invoking both Polanyi and Mauss, offers a useful typology of three types of reciprocity.

1. First is *generalized reciprocity*, usually practiced within nuclear families, that involves flows of gifts in one direction (as from parents to children) for sustained periods of time. This comes closest to notions of pure altruism.
2. In *balanced reciprocity*, participants strive to make gifts and counter-gifts roughly equivalent, although there is often an explicit denial that accounts are kept.
3. *Negative reciprocity* is when one party takes advantage of an implicit understanding and does not reciprocate.

II. In band-level societies such as the Dobe, generalized reciprocity forms the basis of the economy.

- A. The nomadic gatherer and hunter lifestyle does not lend itself to the accumulation of personal possessions; there is little sense of private property.
- B. The ecological circumstances in which the Dobe live also contribute to the need for extensive reciprocity.
 1. Water holes, for example, are nominally owned by a particular band, but other bands are never refused gifts of water if they are in need.
 2. The Dobe also practice balanced reciprocity through *hxaro* exchanges. These are roughly equivalent exchanges of ostrich shell water vessels, glass beads, and other goods with members of neighboring bands.

III. The Yąnomamö practice balanced reciprocity through feasts.

- A. In 1968, Timothy Asch filmed what has become a classic anthropological documentary, *The Feast*.
 1. The feast was hosted by the village of Patanaowā-teri (pop. 225), who had invited the Mahekoto-teri (pop. 125) to bury an old dispute and enter into a new alliance.
 2. During the ritualized start of the feast, both groups demonstrate their fierceness through mock battle.

3. The feast is tense because the Mahekoto-teri are fearful of an ambush, while the Patanaowā-teri worry that their generosity will not be reciprocated.
 4. The feast ends with the guests demanding specific gifts from their hosts—usually a bow or poison-arrow tips but sometimes a prized possession. The hosts cannot refuse the requests.
- B.** Investigative journalist Patrick Tierney has sharply criticized Napoleon Chagnon and his contributions to making *The Feast*.
1. Tierney claims that Chagnon convinced the Patanaowā-teri to move to an old village site closer to the Orinoco, enticing them with measles vaccination. He compensated them with metal pots, axes, and other trade goods; Tierney sees this influx of trade goods as upsetting normal village relations.
 2. After the feast, the Patanaowā-teri and Mahekoto-teri carry out a common raid on another village, resulting in the death of a woman there.

IV. The Trobriand Islanders are famous for a form of escalating balanced reciprocity known as the *kula* ring.

- A.** Traditionally, *kula* trading was the prerogative of chiefs and those from chiefly lineages, although over the years, more and more men from lesser-ranked lineages came to participate.
- B.** *Kula* trading takes place between individuals on different islands with goods whose value is purely symbolic.
1. Two goods are traded in the *kula*: shell armbands and necklaces.
 2. The armbands travel in only a counterclockwise direction, and the necklaces travel in only a clockwise direction through the *kula* circuit.
 3. Each item has a particular history associated with it; the more prestigious its former owners, the more value the armband or necklace will have.
 4. *Kula* participants will have trading partners on neighboring islands in both directions. Traders try to escalate the terms of the balanced reciprocity of the *kula* system in order to possess—although only temporarily—famous items.
 5. Marvin Harris, for example, has argued that the *kula* exchange is just an excuse for the trade in subsistence items that takes place off to the side of the ritual exchange.

- V. Reciprocity is not confined to exotic societies—in many ways, it oils the wheels of daily social interaction in our own culture.
 - A. The rules of reciprocity are most often unspoken, intentionally ambiguous. In giving Christmas or birthday presents to someone, both would deny any sort of calculation beyond a purely emotional response—but accounts are kept.
 - B. Giving too small of a gift can be insulting; but giving too large of a gift can also damage a relationship by overly indebting the recipient.
 - C. Marketers often employ the principles of reciprocity to sell products and foster brand loyalty.

Readings:

Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*.

Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*.

Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is a gift ever given without expectations of some return?
2. Why is it impolite to bring up the political considerations that go into gift-giving in U.S. culture?
3. How do the Trobrianders use reciprocal obligations in their quest for fame?
4. Why are Yānomamö feasts potentially dangerous events?

Lecture Seventeen

Chieftdoms and Redistribution

Scope: In chieftdom-level societies, *redistributive exchange* underpins both political and economic relations. Redistribution works off the good will produced by reciprocity: A gift, be it from a friend or a chief, entails obligation, and that obligation can be converted into political power.

Among the Trobriand Islanders, chiefs engage in extensive and complicated networks of yam exchanges. They place the yams they receive as gifts in a specially built display hut to serve as a public symbol of that chief's political clout. Annual yam competitions are likewise politically loaded events, because the chief with the largest yam will build political power.

The Kwakiutl Indians of the Northwest Coast also practice a form of redistribution in their potlatch feasts. Chiefs host potlatches to solidify the allegiance of their subjects, and they are not only expected to give away enormous amounts of food, blankets, and native art, but to destroy valuable goods as well. Potlatches are not merely conspicuous consumption, however; they also serve as an important economic security net for regions occasionally beset by food shortages.

Outline

- I. Economic redistribution occurs to some degree in all cultures.
 - A. Households commonly pool resources and reallocate them in terms of need. Nation-states likewise practice varying degrees of redistribution through tax systems.
 - B. Redistribution is the central economic and political organizational principle of chieftdom-level societies.
 - 1. Redistribution acts as a means of indebting subjects and fortifying political power for chiefs.
 - 2. Gaining political capital from redistribution plays into the tenets of reciprocity; it may be seen at work in nation-states through political pork barrel projects.

- II. The Trobriander Islanders are a chiefdom, and chiefs build up their status through the *kula* ring, as well as various forms of redistribution.
- A. Trobriand matrilineages are ranked in status; a chief or nobleman inherits his position not from his father but from his mother's brother.
1. Rank and eligibility for chiefdomship is ascribed, determined by one's matrilineage of birth and standing within that lineage.
 2. Within the limitations of kinship, however, there is a great deal of room for jockeying for power.
 3. Chiefs nominally own all coconuts and pigs; thus, any consumption of these savored items is symbolically a gift from the chief.
- B. Yams are a staple of the Trobriand diet and at the symbolic heart of Trobriand society.
1. Noblemen maintain two types of gardens: one to eat from and one to trade from. Trobriand men spend a great deal of time cultivating yams.
 2. Yams are symbols of wealth, power, and prestige. Chiefs build elaborate open-front yam huts to hold their bounty and prove their political worth.
 3. But the yams on display cannot be grown by the chief himself. They must be received as gifts from relatives—from members of his own matrilineage and his wives' matrilineages.
- C. Politically ambitious men need to get relatives to give them yams, which they will display and redistribute.
1. Malinowski recorded that a man primarily received yams from his wife's brother. He saw this as symbolic compensation by a child's matrilineage to his paternal progenitor.
 2. Annette Weiner found that yams do indeed come from a man's wife's matrilineage but that these are given *through* the wife, building up an obligation from the husband.
 3. This obligation has to be paid back in gifts from husbands of women's wealth: banana-leaf bundles and skirts.
 4. Annette Weiner also argues that the *kula* trade is best understood as a "quest for fame"; ambitious chiefly aspirants try to make their symbolic fortunes.
 5. Pierre Bourdieu distinguishes between economic capital and symbolic capital (which includes social and cultural capital).

In societies such as the Trobriands, the value of symbolic capital eclipses that of economic capital.

6. With the yam gifts, a husband is able to redistribute these to villagers and, thus, build up his political base.

D. The Trobriand preoccupation with yams comes to a climax during their harvest festivals in July and August.

1. Known as *mwasawa* (the “time of play”), a centerpiece of the festivals are yam competitions between chiefs.
2. Competition yams are known as *kuvi*. They are decorated and may be up to 12' long.
3. The chief with the biggest yam wins the competition and increases his prestige as a great man.

III. The Kwakiutl are a chiefdom-level society of the Northwest Coast region.

A. First studied by Boas, the Kwakiutl today are best known for their totem poles (actually chiefly genealogies) and masks (especially the spectacular transformation masks).

1. An anomaly for a chiefdom, their economy is not based on agriculture but rather “gathering,” inasmuch as salmon fishing may be considered gathering.
2. The natural abundance of salmon, which can be smoked to last all year, was sufficient to sustain the large population densities that give rise to chiefdom-style political organization.
3. The Kwakiutl are mostly matrilineal, although some groups practice cognatic descent.
4. As with the Trobrianders, chiefs claim the right to their positions through inheritance, yet within the confines of kinship, a great deal of political maneuvering for position takes place.

B. Kwakiutl chiefs must continually solidify their support and expand their base to stay in power. They do this largely through feasts called *potlatches*.

1. Hosting a potlatch feast requires months or years of saving and preparation. Guests from neighboring villages are invited and feted for several days.

2. In the course of the potlatch, guests are given gifts of art, fish oil, berries, and blankets. Chiefs will also sometimes destroy canoes or pieces of art.
 3. Following contact and the great demand for pelts by the Hudson Bay Company, the Kwakiutl saw huge inflation in the expectations for a successful potlatch. The potlatch was eventually outlawed and has only recently reemerged among Kwakiutl communities.
- C. Since Boas's day, the potlatch has long intrigued anthropologists.
1. Boas saw the potlatch as the product of a particular history. Boas's student Ruth Benedict expanded on this notion, arguing that it was a cultural pattern pushed out of control by Western contact.
 2. Others argue that it serves a material function by increasing productivity all around and providing an economic safety net.

Readings:

Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*.

Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Pacific*.

Annette Weiner, *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does redistribution build up political power?
2. What is the purpose of destructive consumption, such as in the potlatch?
3. How do yams (which are men's wealth) play into the economy of females?

Cultures, Economies, and Western Expansion

Lecture Eighteen

Cultural Contact and Colonialism

Scope: State-level societies have large populations, market economies, and standing armies. Western states have used their military and economic might to expand their influence. Early contacts between Westerners and natives were often wrought with cultural misunderstandings. The arrival of Cortés in 1524 played into existing political instability in the Aztec empire and to popular beliefs about the return of the god Quetzalcoatl from the west. Similarly, Captain Cook was taken for Lono by the Hawaiians and ultimately murdered as a result.

Western contact brought not only goods and ideas but also disease and devastation for many native peoples. In the New World in particular, disease and, to a lesser extent, warfare wiped out a large percentage of the native population. At the same time, Europe's hunger for gold and silver, tea and sugar, and other exotic and valuable goods led to the push to create colonies around the world. We look to the rise of the rubber trade in Brazil and the enormous wealth it created in the middle of the Amazon—and to the market's devastating collapse. We also examine the role of “drug foods” in creating markets for European traders, especially the opium-for-tea trade that led to the outbreak of war between England and China.

Western contact has also led to new forms of consumerism among native peoples. Although we may lament the loss of traditional ways of life, we must keep in mind that this is often what the natives want. We conclude by considering the peculiar case of cargo cults that arose in Melanesia following World War II.

Outline

- I. The history of contact between the Western nation-states and the rest of the world has been fraught by cultural misunderstandings.

- A.** Hernán Cortés set sail from Cuba in 1519 and landed on the coast of Veracruz, where he met representatives of the Aztec emperor Montezuma.
1. At the time of Spanish contact, the Aztec empire had expanded to the point where internal tensions were beginning to threaten its stability.
 2. In the decade before Cortés's arrival, there had been a number of evil omens that were interpreted as foretelling the fall of the empire.
 3. The mythology of the god Quetzalcoatl—a white being supposed to return one day from the east to reclaim the Aztec empire—played into Cortés's arrival, so that many saw him as a god.
 4. Cortés was able to communicate with Montezuma through two translators: Jeronimo de Aguilar, a shipwrecked Spanish sailor who learned Mayan, and La Malinche, an Aztec woman who also spoke Mayan.
 5. With just a small number of troops (significantly, with horses), Cortés was able to defeat the grand Aztec empire.
- B.** A similar misunderstanding resulted from Captain James Cook's encounter with the Hawaiians.
1. At the time of contact, Hawaiian political organization was a highly developed chiefdom led by King Kamehameha.
 2. Kings were considered to be semi-divine, and royal families practiced incest to keep the blood lines pure.
 3. Two primary deities for the Hawaiians were Lono, the god of fertility, and Ku, the god of war. In the decades before contact, Ku had ascended in importance as the Hawaiian empire expanded through subjugating neighboring groups.
 4. Lono remained an important deity, and he was the focus of elaborate annual rituals to ensure the continuation of the agricultural cycle.
 5. In 1778, Captain James Cook arrived from Tahiti around the time of the Lono celebrations, and many took him to be Lono or one of the god's emissaries.
 6. In January of 1779, Cook returned, again during the Lono festival. When he left, a mast broke and he was forced to return in February, at a point in the ritual calendar when Ku

usurps Lono's power. Cook was killed, serving as a proxy for Lono.

- II. Western contact also brought devastation to many native peoples as they tried to cope with new diseases and new economic relations.
 - A. In the process of conquest, disease was often just as effective as war and brute subjugation. This was especially true in the New World, where native populations were decimated.
 - B. Out of the colonial encounters also emerged a situation of economic dependency.
 - 1. World system theory sees the global colonial economy as composed of the core countries of Western Europe and the United States and the peripheral countries of the Southern Hemisphere.
 - 2. Peripheral countries—which sell raw materials—are seen to develop a dependency on core countries—which make value-added products from the imported materials.
 - 3. The 19th-century rubber boom in Brazil illustrates the precarious position of relying on one primary export.
 - a. By the late 18th century, novelty rubber products had begun to trickle into Europe from Brazil. In the early 19th century, cottage industries along the Amazon were producing small quantities of erasers and rubber shoes.
 - b. In 1844, Charles Goodyear discovered the process of rubber vulcanization, making it resistant to freezing and cracking. This greatly expanded the usefulness of rubber, and demand from Europe began to rise. John Dunlop's 1890 invention of the pneumatic tire opened further markets.
 - c. Natural rubber comes from the *Hevea brasiliensis*, and demand was met by legions of tappers. Great wealth was created—the Amazonian city of Manaus was a showcase—and by 1910, 40 percent of all of Brazil's export earnings came from rubber exports.
 - d. However, in 1875, Henry Wickham smuggled rubber seeds and seedlings to London's Kew Gardens. The plants were adapted to the climates of Britain's Asian colonies, and production in Malaysia began in the 1890s.

- e. In Brazil, rubber plantations were made impossible because of the South American leaf blight. Thus, the Southeast Asian producers were able to vastly undersell the labor-intensive Brazilian producers. Brazilian rubber exports virtually disappeared by the 1920s.

III. Western expansion also brought with it capitalism and a rise in consumerism.

- A. Following World War II, a number of independent but very similar messianic movements emerged on once-inhabited islands. These are known as *cargo cults* because of their emphasis on Western material culture.
- B. During the war, these cultures witnessed an almost unimaginable influx of goods in occupied areas, which, once the war ended, was gone as quickly as it arrived.
- C. Melding this experience with traditional millenarian religious beliefs, cults emerged that attempted to call back the cargo planes and ships that had left. Model airplanes, runways, and telegraphs were constructed for use in the ceremonies.
- D. The most famous of these was the John Frum cult of the New Hebrides, centered on the U.S. army uniform of one "John Frum."

Readings:

Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*.

Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*.

Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History*.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. How has Western contact changed native societies for good or bad?
- 2. What do people from other cultures find so compelling about Western goods?
- 3. How did events in other parts of the world affect rubber production in Brazil?

Lecture Nineteen

Cultures of Capitalism

Scope: Capitalism, which first arose in England in the 18th century, has become the dominant mode of economic organization around the world. The spread of capitalism has also brought about fundamental cultural changes. A Marxist perspective defines capitalism as when labor comes to be treated as a commodity that can be bought and sold in the market.

In cultural anthropology, we employ a concept of *hegemony* that is at once more precise and more ambiguous than common usage (synonymous with “political domination”). In anthropology, *hegemony* refers to the ways that domination can be achieved through cultural indoctrination rather than brute force. Karl Marx argued that culture—in the form of ideology—can blind individuals to their own self-interests (think of his famous characterization of religion as an opiate of the masses). This notion was expanded by the Italian scholar Antonio Gramsci, who introduced the concept of hegemony to explain how control over education and the mass media promulgate prevailing ideologies. Yet, from an anthropological perspective, hegemony is a problematic concept because it assumes that we (the observers) know better than the people we study.

In this lecture, we discuss the nature of state-level power. We also examine cultural strategies and the ways groups with little power use such “weapons of the weak” to pursue their ends. For example, Malaysian peasants resist trends toward agricultural mechanization by dragging their feet, spreading gossip, feigning ignorance, and other forms of non-confrontational resistance.

Outline

- I. The emergence of capitalism, first in England and Europe, then spreading across the world, has been a long-term process, going back to the 18th century.
 - A. Karl Marx defines capitalism in a very particular way: when labor becomes a commodity.

1. Marx presents a scheme in which commodities (C) and money (M) are traded. In the simplest form of trade, *barter*, one commodity is exchanged for another: $C-C^1$; money may then emerge as an intermediary in this equation: $C-M-C^1$.
 2. The age of exploration and global trade brought about what Marx termed *mercantilism*: $M-C-M^1$. Here, the abstraction of money replaces the concrete utility of a commodity as the goal of exchange.
 3. Finally, *capitalism* emerges when part of C = labor (that is, when labor is treated as a commodity).
- B.** Developments in the production of cotton cloth in the 18th century played a major role in England's industrial revolution.
1. Woolen textiles were long important products of England, Ireland, and Scotland, produced by cottage-industry artisans. This was also the model for early production of cotton textiles.
 2. However, starting in the 1730s (with John Kay's invention of the flying shuttle) and throughout the 18th century, technological developments (including Eli Whitney's 1793 cotton gin) led to enormous increases in efficiencies.
 3. By 1810, one spinner could produce as much cotton as 200 spinners were capable of in 1740, but production was concentrated in water (and, later, steam) mills.
 4. This increase in efficiency came at the expense of the independent lifestyle of artisan producers, who could not compete on price with the big mills and were eventually forced to work in the mills.
- C.** Marx argued that these changes in the economic base produced novel forms of social organization—including the heightened alienation of workers and consumers.
1. In capitalist forms of production, workers do not control the means of production but are free to sell their labor to whomever they please.
 2. Furthermore, workers become alienated from the fruits of their labors, no longer feeling the close artisan connection with their products that was the norm for most of human history.

- II.** Marx saw society and culture as often obfuscating the material circumstances of individuals, inducing people to act in ways not in their own self-interests.
- A.** In his 1852 essay “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” Marx develops his notion of “hidden” or “false” consciousness.
1. He saw the French peasants as being duped by Louis Bonaparte’s Napoleonic rhetoric and efforts to conjure up the image of his benevolently regal uncle, Napoleon Bonaparte.
 2. But his policies encouraging private property forced peasants to mortgage their patrimonies to the emergent banking class.
 3. Elsewhere, Marx argues that religion is an opiate of the masses, submerging class-consciousness.
- B.** The Italian scholar Antonio Gramsci, whose writings survive from scraps smuggled out of his prison cell in the 1920s, developed Marx’s idea of false consciousness into the concept of *hegemony*.
1. *Hegemony*, in Gramsci’s words, is “the ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group.” This is to say that hegemony occurs when dominant classes leverage their privileged access to mass media and national discourse to foment support for the system that privileges them.
 2. In this light, hegemonies are particular ideologies—representing particular class interests—that come to be seen as “natural” or “common sense”—taken for granted and unquestioned.
 3. Gramsci argued that war is a breakdown of hegemony—hegemony mutes and co-opts opposition, thus removing the need for bare-faced domination.
- III.** Much recent anthropology that looks at power relations adopts a Gramscian-style critique of hegemonic systems. Documenting resistance to hegemonies has become a hallmark of modern cultural studies.
- A.** This owes much to the political scientist James Scott.
1. Scott conducted fieldwork in the 1970s in “Sedaka,” a small agrarian village (of a few hundred residents) in Malaysia.

2. The green revolution techniques of fertilizer and mechanization were beginning to be implemented in local rice farming.
 3. The new techniques brought higher yields but also resulted in the success of a few larger farms over the vast majority of small-holding farmers and fueled incipient class tensions.
- B.** Scott found that overt opposition to the changes was effectively squelched by Malaysian authorities, but the farmers of Sedaka had developed a number of “weapons of the weak” they used to fight the new hegemony.
1. Weapons of the weak can be very effective because they are hard to combat. They may include foot dragging, feigned ignorance, false compliance, gossip, and others forms of covert action.
 2. They offer resistance without overt opposition.
- C.** Despite its utility as an analytic tool, anthropologists have problems with the concept of hegemony.
1. We tend to privilege the words of our informants, while critiques of hegemony often see them as being duped by an ideology.
 2. Often, the power at stake in hegemonic formations is ambiguous. For example, the tremendous rise in breast implant surgeries may be seen as a form of male hegemony in the United States or as a form of female empowerment.

Readings:

Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*.

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Can someone be oppressed without realizing it?
2. How do political ideologies shape the modern American cultural landscape?
3. Is elective plastic surgery empowering or an example of hegemonic duping?

Lecture Twenty

Is Economics Rational?

Scope: Culture and economics are intimately related, even if disciplinary boundaries too often separate their study. Economics may be defined as the study of how scarce resources are allocated toward specific ends. From the Greek root for “household” (*oikos*), economics originally referred to the ethic of household provisioning. In modern usage, it has come to refer to the science of economic decision making. Yet it is a science that rests on a number of big assumptions about rationality.

In this lecture, we examine economic rationality from the perspective of different cultures. We find that symbolic values (rather than strict material utility) motivate economic transactions among the Dobe, the Trobrianders, and even in contemporary U.S. culture. We thus place economics in cultural context, recognizing its valuable contributions to understanding human behavior but also acknowledging that economic logics vary across cultures. Finally, we turn to recent findings from experimental and behavioral economics, especially the “prisoner’s dilemma” and “ultimatum games,” showing how cultural notions of equitability often trump strict rational self-interests, even in our own culture.

Outline

- I. Economics is the study of how limited resources are allocated.
 - A. From the Greek *oikos* (“household”) and *nomos* (“law”), economics was originally concerned with managing households. During the 20th century, it moved from a more philosophical and humanistic approach to a more scientific orientation.
 - B. Economics studies the production, distribution, and consumption of goods. This includes not only how we produce the goods we consume but also the social relations they involve.
- II. Economic anthropologists take a different approach to the economy than do economists. The discipline of economics has adopted a *formalist* paradigm that attempts to isolate human behavior. Economic

anthropology takes a *substantivist* approach, seeing all economic relations as embedded in particular social contexts.

A. In economics, there has been a move from the study of political economy to *econometrics*—that is, toward mathematical models of behavior.

1. Much economic modeling rests on the assumption that everyone acting in his or her own best self-interest advances the self-interests of all (Adam Smith's *invisible hand*).
2. Economic models tend to assume strict rationality and universal applicability.
3. Image advertising campaigns pose a problem for rational models.

B. In contrast, a substantivist approach is more culturally relative, seeing all economies as culturally embedded.

1. Max Weber took a substantivist approach in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904), showing how capitalism developed in the Protestant German north but not in the Catholic south.
2. Substantivists argue that many of the assumptions of economic models may work in Western cultures but often do not apply in native societies.
3. Marshall Sahlins has shown how even the U.S. food industry is based as much on cultural consumption as material necessity.

III. Economics, anthropology, and psychology have converged in recent years with the burgeoning subfields of experimental and behavioral economics.

A. Experimental economics tests the expectations of rationality through actual behavior.

1. The “prisoner’s dilemma” is a classic example of an economic experiment—and one in which the optimal solution for both parties is not the most individually rational.
2. The “ultimatum game” pairs two individuals. Player A is given a sum of money (x), a percentage of which he must offer Player B. If the offer is accepted, the money is split as offered, but if the offer is rejected, neither player gets any money.

- B. Behavioral economics likewise looks at actual (not ideal) behaviors; it is much more anthropological in that it seeks to build theory from observable behavior.
 - 1. The concept of *bounded rationality* is a central theme in behavioral economics, looking at how knowledge, context, and cognition affect one's rationality.
 - 2. Full knowledge is crucial to making rational choices, but as Joseph Stiglitz and others show, real-work economic transactions often involve asymmetrical access to information.
- C. Behavioral and experimental economics can help us explain a number of rational anomalies in our everyday behavior.
- D. Proximate knowledge (information that has recently come to our attention) carries a disproportionate weight in our decision-making processes that is often irrational.

IV. Recent work in developmental economics has also turned toward anthropology.

Readings:

Michael Kearney, *Reconceptualizing the Peasantry*.

Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*.

Richard H. Thaler, *The Winner's Curse*.

Richard Wilk, *Cultures and Economies*.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. Are there situations where one acts more (or less) rationally than at other times?
- 2. What would your offer be in an ultimatum game?
- 3. Do you place the same monetary value on opportunity costs as on other financial outlays?

Lecture Twenty-One

Late Capitalism—From Ford to Disney

Scope: The late 20th-century U.S. economy was a period termed *late capitalism*. Late capitalism may be dated to the early 1970s and the launch of the first communication satellites. Since that time, communication technology has increased and prices have dropped dramatically, making the world a virtually smaller place. Transportation costs have likewise dropped.

Industrial capitalism is marked by *Fordist* forms of production—namely, assembly-line mass production. In contrast, the post-industrial era of late capitalism has moved toward what is termed *post-Fordism*. Post-Fordist strategies simultaneously move toward outsourcing production while attempting to reduce the alienation inherent in capitalist production. The experimental venture of General Motors to produce Saturn cars illustrates the post-Fordist trend.

It has been argued that as the American economy has moved away from industrial production, it has become increasingly symbolic. We look to advertising strategies, the new urbanism movement, and Las Vegas and Disneyland to show how symbolic values drive the American economy.

Outline

- I. Adam Smith shows the collective benefit of trade and specialization that allowed capitalist production to expand.
 - A. This was especially clear during the move to industrialization and mass production.
 - B. Antonio Gramsci describes the processes of *Taylorism* and *Fordism* that led to increasing specialization of tasks and alienation of workers.
 - C. After Henry Ford opened his assembly-line factory, the price of a Model T fell from \$780 in 1910 to \$360 in 1914.
- II. Late capitalism has been around since the early 1970s, although the pace of change greatly accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s.

- A. Late capitalism is marked by post-Fordism: post-industrial production; decentralization; and greater mobility of capital, labor, and ideas.
 - 1. In the late 20th century, the U.S. economy transformed from a factory-based industrial model to a service-based economy. Increasingly, production takes place overseas.
 - 2. This system has been enabled by greater mobility of capital, commodities, and people.
- B. The best example of post-Fordist production comes from Saturn, a subsidiary of General Motors formed in 1985 to rethink the process of industrial organization. The first Saturn cars rolled off the Spring Hill, Tennessee, assembly lines in 1990.
 - 1. Saturn employs a post-Fordist style of labor-management relations that stresses teamwork, empowerment, and responsibility.
 - 2. The early ads emphasize this style, arguing that the company's workers are no longer alienated in the same way Marx envisioned.
 - 3. Saturn also tries to recreate the bond between consumer and producer, as seen in later ads.

III. In the late-capitalist marketplace, symbolic values have, in many ways, come to replace material values.

- A. There is increasing investment in *fictitious* capital (versus productive or *real*) capital; fictitious capital may include image, brand maintenance, intellectual property, art, and other such intangibles.
 - 1. Soft-drink and tennis-shoe ads attempt to sell images of authenticity.
 - 2. Neighborhood-style chain restaurants, micro-brews, and single-malt scotch likewise appeal to a quest for something "real."
 - 3. Yuppie coffees, artisan chocolates, and other such gourmet fare attempt to recapture a presumptively lost authenticity.
- B. Simultaneously, there is a trend in American culture to recapture the "real" that has seemingly been lost. The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard argues that just as we have come to define ourselves more by what we consume than by what we produce, we also seek authenticity more than ever.

1. Baudrillard introduces the concept of *hyperreality* in his examination of contemporary U.S. culture.
2. Hyperreality attempts to be more real than the real thing, where the meticulous copy becomes more meaningful than the original. Reality television and Starbucks illustrate this phenomenon.

IV. Examples of hyperreality may be found in the entertainment economy of the United States.

- A. Disneyland has recreated a Louisiana swamp tour, mini-exhibits of foreign capitals, and other better-than-the-original copies.
- B. The theme casino-hotels of Las Vegas similarly copy the grandeur of New York or Paris or Venice.
- C. An architectural movement called the *new urbanism* attempts to recapture aspects of community that were lost in the process of suburbanization.
 1. Disney's planned community outside of Orlando--Celebration, Florida--employs alleys, sidewalks, and front porches to conjure up neighborly spirit.
 2. Some residents have resisted the strict conformity such a project in social engineering requires; they protest by placing pink flamingos in their yards.
- D. The painter Thomas Kinkade further blurs the boundary between original and copy with his retouched lithographs.

Readings:

Jean Baudrillard, *Simulation and Simulacra*.

Setha Low, *Behind the Gates*.

David Remnick, ed., *The New Gilded Age*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why is "authenticity" so important in American consumer culture?
2. Can Marx's notion of alienation provide useful insights for management strategies?
3. How does hyperreality try to capture an idealized past?

Ethnic Identities in a Globalized World

Lecture Twenty-Two

The Maya, Ancient and Modern

Scope: The Maya are best remembered for the grandeur of their classic-era (A.D. 250–900) civilization—the impressive temples and cities built in the rainforest, their hieroglyphic writing, the blood sacrifice. But there are more than 8 million Maya living in what is today Guatemala, Belize, and southern Mexico. In this lecture, we look at the modern Maya and the ways their culture has been shaped over the centuries. We look at ancient Maya calendrical systems that are maintained today by Maya shamans and the unique patterns of dress and language that set the Maya apart. We also look to the effects of Guatemala’s brutal civil war of the early 1980s on Maya communities and what this can tell us about violence and terrorism.

The Maya case illustrates many of the themes discussed in this course and shows how cultures can change yet retain a sense of continuity at the same time.

Outline

- I.** Classic Maya civilization flourished from about A.D. 250 to around A.D. 900.
 - A.** It arose in the quasi-rainforest region of lowland Central America.
 - 1.** Grand city-states, such as Tikal, Copán, and Dos Pilas, were constructed in the jungle and ruled over by kings and priests. Elaborate webs of trade, kinship, and political alliance linked these polities.
 - 2.** Dense populations were supported by maize farmers, who employed raised fields and other techniques to produce crops in the relatively fragile soils of the region.
 - B.** The classic Maya had highly developed bodies of astronomical, mathematical, and calendrical knowledge.
 - 1.** Maya calendars were used for ritual purposes, as well as recording the absolute dates of historical events.

2. The Maya were the only New World culture to develop a fully functional writing system, and in recent years, great advances have been made in decoding the Maya hieroglyphs. The texts can be used to corroborate archaeological data.
 3. There was no division between science and religion, and numerology and astrology were central to the Maya belief system. Blood sacrifice was also practiced to ensure continuation of the cycle of life.
- C. Around A.D. 900, classic Maya civilization collapsed: The Maya stopped building grand temples, writing hieroglyphic texts, and maintaining their key calendrical system. Increasing warfare and ecological stress led to the collapse.
- II. The Maya did not mysteriously disappear at the collapse, however; they simply stopped living in their previous cities. Post-classic Maya civilizations (A.D. 900–1524) arose in the highland region of Guatemala and Chiapas, Mexico.
- III. Today, about half the population of Guatemala is made up of Maya Indians.
- A. Guatemala is a relatively small country (about the size of Tennessee) with a population of about 12 million.
 1. More than 21 separate Mayan languages are spoken in Guatemala today; these are further divided along town-specific dialects.
 2. Traditional dress is the most visible marker of Maya identity for indigenous women. The hand-woven skirts and blouses are patterned on community-specific styles.
 - B. Guatemala has an extremely high poverty rate; more than half of the population lives in poverty and over 16 percent, in extreme poverty. Guatemala ranks among the worst in Latin America for life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy, and other measures.
 - C. Guatemalan society is divided between the indigenous and *ladino* (or non-Indian) populace. Indians suffer the highest poverty rates in the country and widespread discrimination.
 - D. Tecpán Guatemala is a Kaqchikel Maya town located in Guatemala's western highlands, where I have conducted long-term fieldwork.

1. Tecpán is located in *tierra fría*, 7,000 feet above sea-level, alongside the Pan-American Highway.
 2. It was the site of the pre-contact Kaqchikel Empire and the first Spanish capital in Guatemala.
 3. Today, there are some 10,000 residents in the town proper, about 70 percent Indian and 30 percent *ladino*.
 4. The town is famous for its large Thursday market, which attracts buyers and sellers from the whole region.
- E. The Maya of Guatemala have retained many of their distinctive customs over the centuries.

IV. Since the time of contact, the Maya have periodically suffered from violent repression. This reached a peak in the early 1980s, a period known as *la violencia*.

- A. Marxist guerrillas emerged in the Maya highlands of Guatemala in the mid-1970s. The Guatemalan military dictatorship responded with overwhelming force.
1. From 1978 to 1981, Guatemala was ruled by General Romeo Lucas Garcia, who promoted a policy of draining the sea of Indians in order to catch the Marxist fish. The violence further escalated from 1981–1982 under the rule of General Efraín Ríos Montt.
 2. Tens of thousands were killed in massacres; the vast majority of the violence was carried out by the army against indigenous villagers.
 3. Although peace accords were signed in 1996, violence still plagues Guatemalan society.
- B. Tecpán suffered enormously through the violence.
1. In 1976, Tecpán was hit by a devastating earthquake, and the whole town was destroyed.
 2. In 1981, a Catholic priest was murdered, the town hall was bombed, and the army set up a garrison off the central plaza. At least 20 clandestine graves have been identified in the area.

V. Distinctive patterns of religious beliefs—some Western and some indigenous—also characterize Maya peoples.

- A. Traditionalist Maya religion invokes the pre-Columbian sacred covenant between gods and humans. Religious specialists called

“day-keepers” (*aj q’ij*) perform rituals and curings to combat the work of evil spirits and malevolent sorcerers.

- B.** About 60 percent of Tecpánecos are at least nominally Catholic and practice a hybrid form of Catholicism and native worship.

Readings:

Robert Carmack, *Harvest of Violence*.

Edward F. Fischer and Carol Hendrickson, *Tecpán Guatemala: A Modern Maya Town in Local and Global Context*.

Rigoberta Menchu, *I Rigoberta Menchu, an Indian Woman*.

Victor Monetjo, *Testimonio: Death of a Guatemalan Village*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How are the modern Maya of Guatemala related to classic-era Maya civilization?
2. Did the civil war in Guatemala fail because it was class-based rather than ethnic-based?
3. How did the culture of terror in Guatemala affect traditional Maya culture?

Lecture Twenty-Three

Maya Resurgence in Guatemala and Mexico

Scope: *Ethnicity* is a slippery term. In some ways, it has come to replace *race* as a socially acceptable way of categorizing people, and it is often used as a synonym for *cultural heritage*. Some view ethnicity as ingrained and innate. But in this lecture, we look to ways that cultural elements can be strategically used in building ethnic identity—the ways that ethnicities are constructed and deployed as political tools. Various identity markers—including language, dress, and cuisine—create boundaries that define in-groups and out-groups. In Guatemala, such markers have historically been the focus of discrimination against indigenous peoples, but in recent years, the Maya, like indigenous peoples around the world, have begun to revitalize their cultural traditions and take pride in their ethnic identity. In this lecture, we examine their efforts and their surprising successes. We also look to the Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico. The Zapatistas have taken a more revolutionary and confrontational approach, forging strategic links with international organizations. The leader of the Zapatistas, Subcomandante Marcos, is not himself an Indian, but he has become a powerful symbol of Maya resistance.

Outline

- I. Ethnicity as a social category encompasses key aspects of race, language, and culture. Ethnicity implies a common origin for the ethnic group.
 - A. Despite its putative genealogical and biological connotations, ethnicity is also something that is actively constructed, performed, and improvised on.
 - B. We use various markers to help us identify ethnic origins, but these can be misleading.
 1. Language is a useful ethnic marker because it is not easily adopted or shed and reflects sustained socialization.
 2. Clothing is a very visible, yet easily adapted, marker of identity.
 3. Racial features are the most common ethnic markers.

- II. Out of the ashes of the Guatemalan holocaust has emerged a pan-Maya movement that seeks to revalue indigenous culture.
 - A. The pan-Maya movement seeks to unify the disparate Maya ethno-linguistic groups and communities to exert influence in the Guatemalan democratic process more effectively.
 - B. Pan-Maya leaders have strategically emphasized that their work is with cultural and linguistic rights to avoid deadly political repercussions.
 - 1. A number of young Maya leaders have been trained in linguistics, and among their first efforts were to have Mayan languages officially recognized and to develop a unified alphabet.
 - 2. These native linguists are adding new words to the vocabularies of Mayan languages so that speakers need not resort to Spanish when speaking about technology or business.
 - 3. Female pan-Mayanists have also developed new styles of traditional dress that crosscut historic town-specific designs.
 - C. Pan-Mayanists glorify the Maya past with a vision of a more pluralistic future Guatemala.
 - 1. They portray classic Maya civilization as learned and largely peaceful, downplaying blood sacrifice.
 - 2. They have resurrected hieroglyphic writing and ancient calendrical systems to use in their publications.
 - D. Given the repressive atmosphere of Guatemalan national politics, the pan-Maya activists have had surprising success. They were able to work many of their key demands into the 1996 peace accords.
- III. Just over the border in Mexico, Maya activists have taken a different stance. There, Zapatista rebels are leading an armed conflict to extract legal and economic concessions from the government.
 - A. The Zapatista rebellion began on 1 January 1994, when armed and masked rebels took over the city of San Cristóbal and a number of other communities in Chiapas.
 - 1. Chiapas is the poorest state in Mexico and, with its high density of Maya peoples, is much like Guatemala.
 - 2. Most Maya communities in Chiapas depend on *milpa* agriculture, which has been threatened in recent years by large-scale farming.

- B.** The 1 January 1994 initial uprising was timed to correspond to the initial implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).
1. The Zapatista movement is firmly anti-globalization and has made alliances with other anti-globalization movements. Ironically, they have used the Internet and other globalized technologies to press their claims.
 2. The Zapatistas especially oppose NAFTA-led efforts to privatize communal lands.
 3. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation takes its name from the Mexican national hero Emiliano Zapata.
- C.** The Zapatistas are led by Subcomandante Marcos, who has become a Mexican pop icon. Marcos often writes his revolutionary communiqués in poetry or as fables. He always wears a black ski mask and is usually smoking a pipe.
1. Marcos has been identified as Rafael Guillén Vicente, a former university professor who moved to the southern Mexican jungle in the mid-1980s.
 2. Marcos is not Maya. He is the son of an upper-middle-class furniture store owner in Tampico.
 3. But, hiding behind his mask, Marcos refuses to be categorized. Indeed, he blends indigenous Maya, Spanish Mexican, and Western cultures into a new, postmodern form.

Readings:

Edward F. Fischer and R. McKenna Brown, eds., *Maya Cultural Activism in Guatemala*.

Matthew Gutman, *The Romance of Democracy*.

Subcomandante Marcos, *Our Words Are Our Weapons*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Does it matter that Subcomandante Marcos is not Maya?
2. How have the Maya of Guatemala used their cultural heritage as a form of social capital?
3. What are the most reliable markers of ethnic identity? Have you ever been mistaken when assuming someone's background?

Lecture Twenty-Four

The Janus Face of Globalization

Scope: Globalization has affected native peoples in ways both positive and negative. In this lecture, we look at the increasingly close contact remote peoples have with the outside world. We look at the effects of gold mining in Brazil and the devastating impact on Yanomamö communities—from disease and heightened violence to breakdowns in traditional community structures. We then turn to the case of the Kayapo, who live farther south in the Brazilian Amazon, and the ways in which they have been able to capitalize on their native identity in ventures with The Body Shoppe, associations with Sting, and the mobilization of resistance to large dam projects. We also look to modern Maya farmers in Guatemala, who are turning to growing exotic crops, such as broccoli and snow peas, for the U.S. market.

Globalization is making the world a more homogenous place just as it foments greater cultural diversity and ethnic strife. In this lecture, we explain this paradox. Looking at McDonald's in Japan and China, we see how even the most emblematic of American cultural imports is interpreted in locally specific ways. We also follow the global chain of the bluefin tuna trade, from New England fishermen to Tokyo wholesalers to San Francisco sushi bars, to see the way that a single commodity takes on many social meanings as it passes through different hands.

Outline

- I. Globalization is nothing new. Indeed, the world was a very globalized place over a century ago. What has changed around the turn of the 21st century is the speed and intensity of interconnections.
 - A. It is useful to distinguish between globalization as empirical reality and globalization as ideology.
 1. In the last half of the 20th century, there was a dramatic drop in the cost of transportation and communication. This has resulted in a virtual collapsing of time and space distances.
 2. What was once the privy of the jet set is now within the reach of the masses. Falling telephone costs and the rise of the

Internet have enabled diaspora communities to maintain close contact with their homelands and has given rise to novel sorts of virtual communities.

3. Predictions that globalization would make the nation-state obsolete were overplayed.
 - B. Some critics fear that the forces of globalization are destroying cultural diversity (the McWorld scenario), while others point out that globalization has strengthened some religious and cultural associations (the *jihad* scenario).
 - C. Most of the clothes we wear, the toys we buy, and the electronics we use are made overseas, connecting us in hidden ways to people around the world.
 1. The trade in bluefin tuna connects New England fishermen to Tokyo traders and, ultimately, to sushi eaters around the world.
 2. Even when cultural goods are exported (by Hollywood or McDonald's), they are always adapted by local populations.
- II. Often, the most detrimental effects of globalization can be seen among the remote, small-scale societies, such as the Yānomamō.
- A. Since the 1960s, the Yānomamō have come into increasing contact with the outside world. For example, Salesian missionaries have set up health clinics, schools, and economic cooperatives at a number of mission posts in Yānomamō territory.
 - B. This contact has brought a variety of major lifestyle changes to the Yānomamō.
 1. Trade goods, introduced by the missionaries, government workers, and anthropologists, have changed social relations based on reciprocity. Access to shotguns has made traditional Yānomamō conflicts even more violent.
 2. Clustering around Salesian missionary outposts, Yānomamō village structure has been upset. New villages are often made of separate houses that allow for more privacy.
 3. On the Venezuelan side, the government has tried to incorporate the Yānomamō into national life, appointing a number of young bilingual Yānomamō to act as government agents. On the Brazilian side of the border, the Yānomamō have been granted a 36,000-square-mile reservation and a degree of formal autonomy.

4. The traditional power structure that valued elders and mediational skills has been supplanted by government-appointed officials.
- C. Gold was discovered in Brazilian Yānomamō territory in the 1980s, leading to an illicit gold rush.
1. As many as 40,000 miners invaded Yānomamō territory, setting up hundreds of clandestine airstrips.
 2. Their crude strip-mining techniques polluted rivers, and their airplanes and helicopters scared off game, strangling neighboring communities.

III. In contrast, the Kayapo of Brazil have fared much better in dealings with the outside world.

- A. The Kayapo, are a GA-speaking group who live along the upper tributaries of the Xingu River in the Amazon region of Brazil. They number about 4,000, living in 14 villages.
1. The Kayapo received large formal land reserves (semi-autonomous territory) from Brazil in the 1980s and 1990s.
 2. They practice slash-and-burn agriculture, as well as hunting and gathering.
 3. Like the Yānomamō, they have headmen (with achieved status and little formal power).
- B. One of the world's largest gold mines is located in Kayapo territory.
1. The neighboring Kayapo village of Gorotire is the largest and wealthiest Kayapo settlement.
 2. Kayapo villages have set up shortwave radios in villages to maintain contact. They have also bought video cameras, televisions, and generators.
 3. With earnings from gold-mining concessions, residents of Gorotire have bought airplanes and hired Brazilian pilots to police their territory for illegal loggers and miners.
- C. The Kayapo have established relations with The Body Shoppe, the rock star Sting, and various international environmental organizations.
1. They supply The Body Shoppe with the Brazil nut oil used in a bestselling line of hair conditioners.

2. “Chief” Ropni (or Raoni) established relations with Sting to work on environmental issues and has even gone on tour with him.
3. Using such international connections, the Kayapo have been able to halt a World Bank–funded government dam project that would have flooded Kayapo lands.

IV. In the modern globalized world, cultures are in increasing contact and are changing with increasing velocity (sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse). Maya farmers around Tecpán, for example, are increasingly growing broccoli for export to the United States.

Readings:

Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

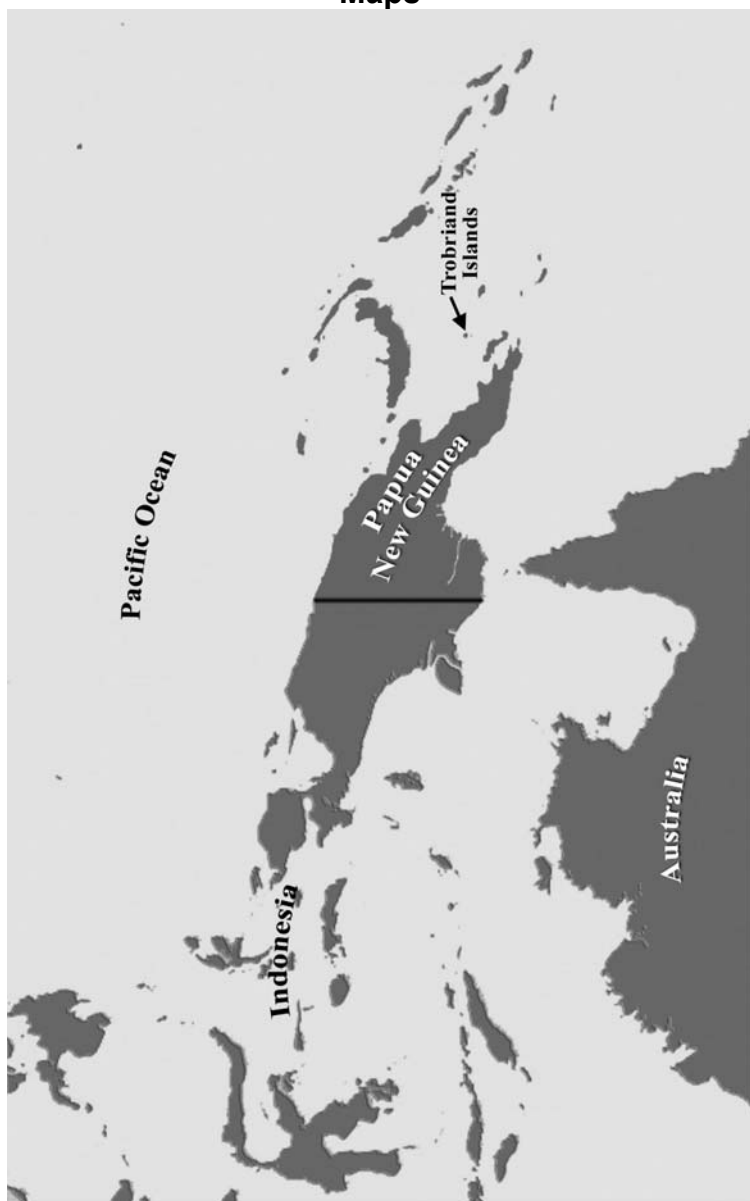
Theodore C. Bestor, *Tsukiji: The Fish Market at the Center of the World*.

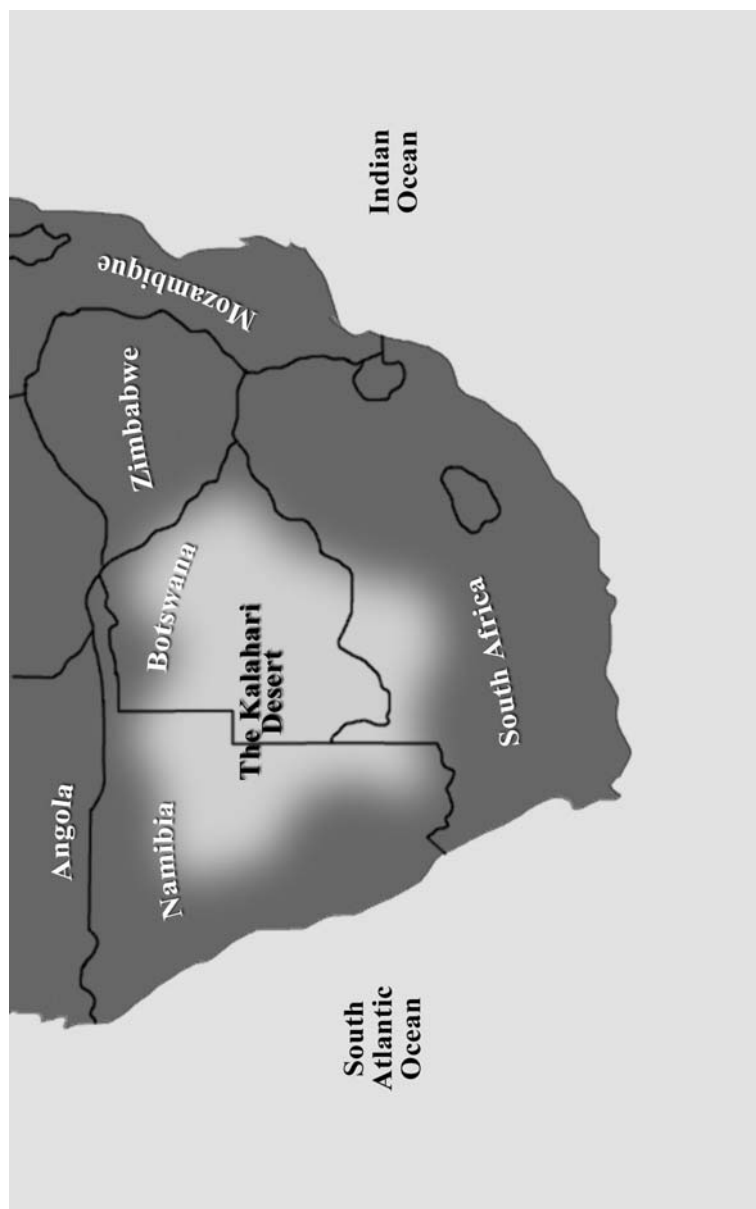
Geoffrey O'Connor, *Amazon Journal: Dispatches from a Vanishing Frontier*.

Questions to Consider:

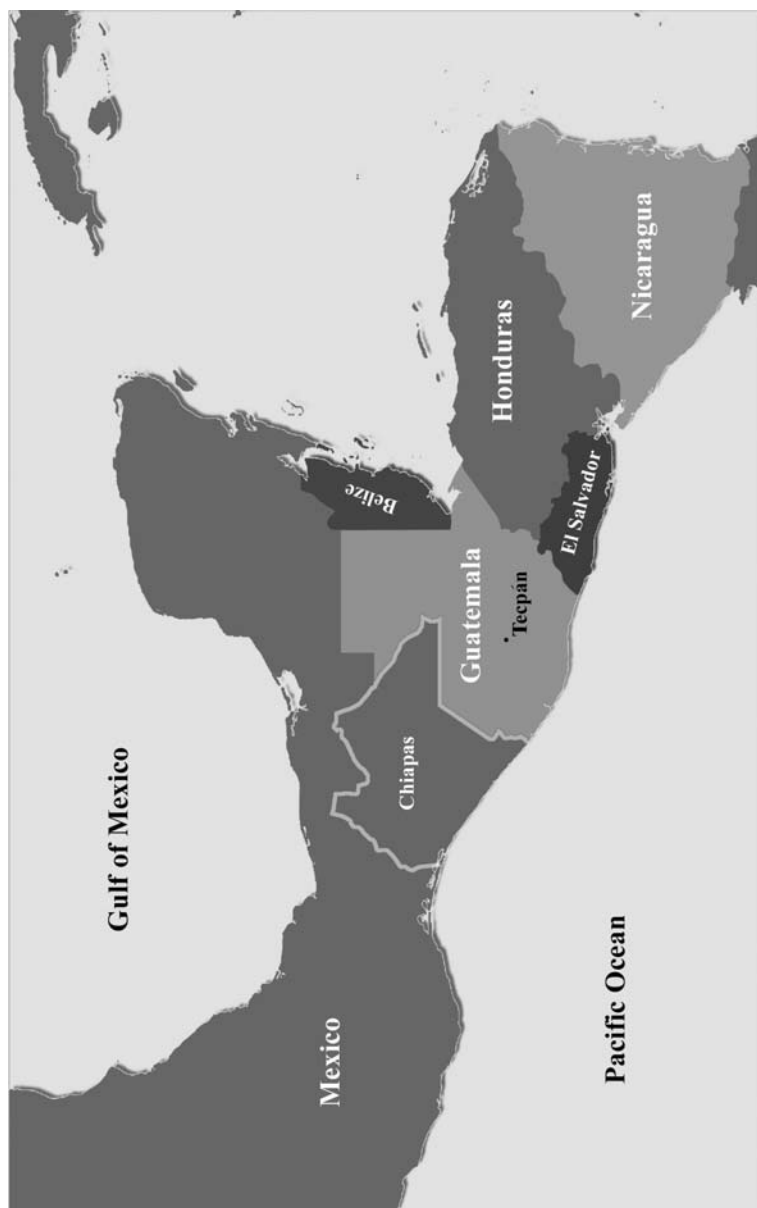
1. Is globalization threatening the cultural diversity of the world?
2. How have ethnic groups been able to leverage their cultural capital to gain concessions from governments?
3. What is the role of culture in the global world?

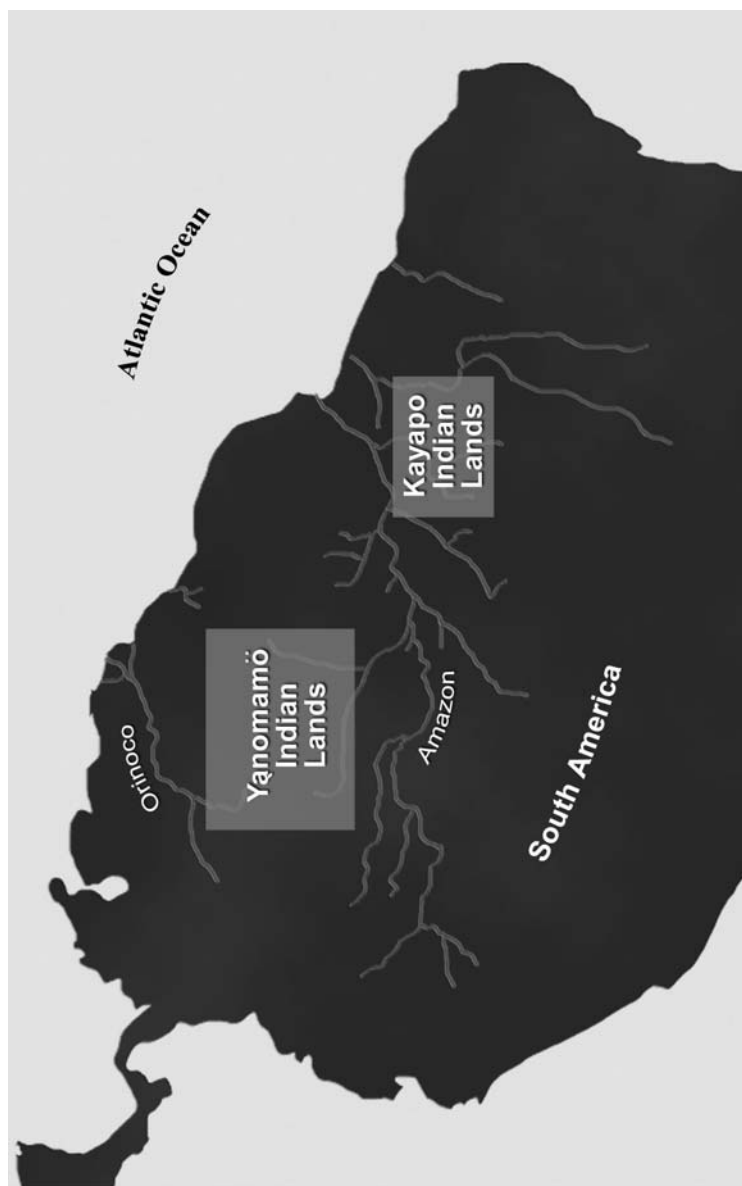
Maps











Glossary

achieved authority: political positions that must be earned through demonstrating one's worthiness (for example, headmen).

affine: a relative by marriage.

animism: a belief in souls.

ascribed authority: inherited political positions.

Australopithecine: early hominids (human ancestors) that walked upright, although they had relatively small brains.

balanced reciprocity: gift-giving with the expectation of receiving a counter-gift of comparable or better value.

bands: social groups of less than 50, without formal political positions, based on gathering and hunting economies; for example, the Dobe Ju/'hoansi.

berdache: third gender in North American Pueblo and Plains societies; men who dress and live as women.

bounded rationality: the idea that humans are more rational in certain contexts than in others.

chiefdoms: social groups with thousands of members, a political system based on hereditary authority; for example, the Trobrianders.

cognate: a word with the same root as the word under study.

cognitive models: mental models of how the world works; may be more or less idiosyncratic (personal models) or shared (cultural models).

communitas: the sense of community solidarity produced by collective passage through a state of liminality.

consanguine: a blood relative.

cross-cousin: children of opposite-sex siblings; one's cross-cousins would be one's father's sister's children and one's mother's brother's children.

cultural capital: a form of symbolic capital based on cultural competencies, including, for example, artistic knowledge and educational credentials.

cultural models: mental models of the world and how it works that are widely shared by members of a culture.

cultural relativism: the notion introduced by Boas that each culture should be considered on its own terms, rather than judged by the cultural standards of another.

ebene: the hallucinogenic snuff used by Yānomamö shamans.

Erklärung: German, used by Max Weber to denote explanation and functional understanding, as opposed to the more subjective *Verstehen*.

emic: the view from within a culture; a cultural insider's explanations; contrast with etic.

endocannibalism: ritualized consumption of the remains of one's dead relatives.

endogamy: rule mandating marriage within a variably defined group (for example, marrying within one's religion or ethnic group).

environment of evolutionary adaptation (EEA): the early Pleistocene of East Africa, where human ancestors first evolved.

ethnocentrism: the (usually implicit) belief that one's culture is superior to others; that one's own cultural customs are "natural."

ethnography: the process of gathering data from fieldwork and writing it up; cultural descriptions of other societies.

etic: an outside perspective on cultural customs; contrast with emic.

exocannibalism: ritualized eating of one's enemies.

exogamy: rule of marriage outside a variably defined group; to marry within that group would be incest.

fa'fa'fines: third gender on Samoa; men who dress and live as women.

Fordism: mass production based on the assembly line model popularized by Henry Ford.

formalist economics: the study of universal laws of economics that are not bound by cultural context (compare with substantivist economics).

gender: the social category associated with a particular sex.

generalized reciprocity: in which gifts flow in one direction for long periods of time.

hau: the Maori concept of the spirit of a gift.

headman: political position in tribal-level societies; the headman must lead by example and constantly reaffirm his right to lead.

hegemony: as developed by Antonio Gramsci, the notion that cultural forms can induce people to willingly accept subjugation and exploitation.

hekura: microscopic spirits that inhabit the Yanomamö world; can steal one's soul; can also be manipulated by shamans.

historical particularism: the notion introduced by Boas that each culture is the product of its own unique history; opposed to the unilineal evolution of 19th-century theorists.

hxaro exchanges: balanced-reciprocity exchanges practiced by the Dobe Ju/'hoansi, often involving glass beads and other trade goods.

hyperreality: term used by philosopher Jean Baudrillard to denote a copy that is, seemingly, more "real" than the original.

inclusive fitness: combines direct fitness (number of an individual's offspring that survive to reproduce themselves) with indirect fitness (the number of an individual's genes, carried by that person and his or her relatives, that are passed down to the next generation); used by sociobiologists to explain nepotism and altruism.

kinesics: the study of body language.

Ku: Hawaiian god of war.

kula: the exchanges of the Trobrianders, in which armbands and necklaces made from shells are traded through a large ring of islands.

late capitalism: stage of capitalist development that started in the 1970s and accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s; characterized by post-industrial knowledge and service economies, economic globalization, and post-Fordist production techniques.

liminality: concept introduced by Victor Turner to denote a temporary state in which normal social strictures are dropped; an inversion of normal social order associated with carnival and rites of passage.

Lono: Hawaiian god of fertility.

magic: belief that the supernatural world can be controlled through rituals; as compared to the belief in an omnipotent supreme being (religion).

milpa agriculture: maize and beans agriculture traditionally practiced by the Maya.

mwasawa: Trobriand period of “play” in the two months after harvest.

natural selection: the mechanism for evolution introduced by Darwin; certain variations among individuals may be favored by natural conditions.

negative reciprocity: taking advantage of the implicit expectations of gift-giving by accepting a gift but never reciprocating.

parallel cousins: cousins of same-sex siblings; one’s mother’s sister’s children and one’s father’s brother’s children.

phoneme: the minimal unit of sound; phonemes vary from culture to culture.

polyandry: marriage of one woman to more than one man.

polygyny: marriage of one man to more than one woman.

potlatch: feasts thrown by Kakiutl chiefs that involve massive redistribution, as well as conspicuous destruction.

post-Fordism: flexible production techniques adopted by Saturn and a number of other companies in the 1990s.

prisoner’s dilemma: a foundational problem in experimental economics: two individuals are arrested for a crime they committed, but the police do not have enough evidence to convict them both of the crime. They are interrogated separately and each made the offer that if both refuse to confess, they will be convicted of a lesser charge and serve two years each; if both confess they will each serve four years; and if only one confesses, that person will go free while the accomplice will serve five years.

	Player B: cooperate	Player B: defect
Player A: cooperate	2 yrs./2 yrs.	5 yrs./0 yrs.
Player A: defect:	0 yrs/5 yrs.	4 yrs./4 yrs.

proxemics: the study of physical distance as a form of communication.

pulaaku: the Fulbe code of conduct that stresses stoicism.

Quetzalcoatl: a primary Aztec deity, usually represented as a feathered serpent, but also said to take the form of a light-skinned man (and, thus, perhaps initially confused with Cortes).

r and K selection: a species' reproductive strategies may be placed on a continuum from r (favoring a large absolute rate of reproduction—many offspring) to K (favoring a low rate of reproduction but investing heavily in those offspring).

Rashomon effect: from the 1950 Japanese film *Rashomon*, the effect of different observers perceiving the same event in very different ways.

sandbadham marriage: fluid marriages between Nayar (India) women and one or more “visiting husbands.”

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: the proposition that worldview and culture are at least partly dictated by grammar and language structure.

shabono: the Yanomamö village made of a circular palisade, a thatched roof living area, and a large open plaza; may have between 40 and 300 inhabitants.

shaman: a religious specialist who acts as a mediator between the spirit world and the material world.

sim-pua marriage: a traditional Chinese form of infant betrothal.

social capital: networks of family, friends, and acquaintances that serve as important assets.

social Darwinism: line of thought developed by Herbert Spencer that attempted to apply Darwin's natural selection to human societies.

substantivist economics: the view that economic systems are culturally embedded, that there are no universal economic laws (compare with formalist economics).

swidden agriculture: also called slash-and-burn, the technique of cutting down and burning trees and vegetation on a plot before planting; swidden plots are usually farmed for several years, then a new plot is cut down.

symbolic capital: forms of non-material capital, such as social capital or cultural capital, that may be converted into material resources.

tali-rite marriage: a temporary and ceremonial marriage performed with young Nayar (India) girls, marking their passage into womanhood.

TAT: Thematic Apperception Test, a psychological test that shows subjects pen-and-ink drawings of various scenes and asks them to describe the scenes.

taupu: ceremonial virgins on Samoa, daughters of chiefs.

Taylorism: developed by Frederick Taylor, a method of production in which each process is broken down into its smallest components to reduce the need for skilled and artisanal labor.

Tenochtitlán: the Aztec capital city; today, the site of Mexico City.

traje: traditional Maya dress.

tribes: social groups with hundreds of members and a headman form of political authority, based on a horticultural economy; for example, the Yānomamö.

ultimatum game: an experimental economics game that pairs two individuals. Player A is given a sum of money (x), a percentage of which he must offer Player B, who can either accept or reject the offer. If the offer is accepted, the money is split as offered, and if the offer is rejected, neither player gets any money.

unokais: honorific given to Yānomamö men who have killed.

Verstehen: the German word used by Max Weber to denote a subjective understanding, as compared with the more functional *Erklärung*.

waiteri: the valued Yānomamö personality quality of fierceness.

weapons of the weak: concept introduced by James Scott to denote the ways in which subjugated and disempowered peoples can exert resistance.

world systems theory: view of the global economy that sees less developed countries as dependent on more developed countries.

Cultural Sketches (Biographical Notes)

Dobe Ju/'hoansi

The Dobe Ju/'hoansi are a hunting and gathering group living in small bands on the northwest edge of the Kalahari Desert in Botswana and Namibia. The Ju/'hoansi follow game and harvest cycles throughout the year, staying within areas defined by water holes. Their camps (which consist of grass huts set around an open plaza) are usually occupied for only a few months.

The Ju/'hoansi (who are also known as the Kalahari Bushmen, the San, and the !Kung) are a classic band-level society (as illustrated in Lecture Thirteen). They have no formal positions of political authority, relying instead on situational leadership. Although we often think of hunters and gatherers as impoverished, studies have shown that there is actually very little hunger among the Ju/'hoansi and that the average workweek is only about 20 hours. In addition, the vast majority of their calories come not from meat but from gathered foods. The Ju/'hoansi also have little notion of private property and practice a generalized form of reciprocity (see Lecture Sixteen).

The Dobe Ju/'hoansi are one of the most thoroughly documented societies in the world, thanks to the work of Richard Lee, Irven DeVore, Marjorie Shostak, and others who worked on the Harvard Kalahari Project starting in 1963.

The Ju/'hoansi speak a San (or “click”) language (discussed in Lecture Six). The / represents a dental click, a sound not unlike “tsk,” as in a scolding (“tsk, tsk”). The *J* is pronounced as in the French “je.” An alternate spelling is Zhu/wansi.

Fulbe

The Fulbe (also known as the Fulani) are an ethnic group spread out across West Africa. Numbering as many as 10 million people, the Fulbe all speak varieties of the Fulfulde language and are (at least nominally) Muslim. They trace their dispersed origins back to early 19th-century *jihads* that spread the faith westward across Africa.

Traditionally, they have had a chiefdom-style political organization, although sustained contact with colonial powers and modern African states has diminished the importance and power of chiefs. Most Fulbe are cattle herders, although the Fulbe of northern Cameroon studied by Helen Regis are farmers.

As discussed in Lecture Nine, the Fulbe have melded Islamic teachings with traditional beliefs. Koranic scholars (*Mallums*) are called upon to interpret scripture and to heal illnesses brought about by cannibal witch attacks and soul-stealing river spirits. There is a strict division between women and men in Fulbe life, but women have more power than in many other Islamic societies. They may divorce, for example, if their husbands do not adequately provide for them with annual gifts of batik cloth. The Fulbe also highly value stoicism; their code of conduct (*pulaaku*) calls for strong emotions to be muted.

The Fulbe also practice an important rite of passage for males (see Lecture Ten). Boys are taken to a temporary camp, where they are forced to eat unclean foods and learn secrets associated with manhood. They are then circumcised and return to the village as men.

Kwakiutl

The Kwakiutl are one of a number of related ethno-linguistic groups living along the northwest coast of North America, from British Columbia up to the Inuit territories of the sub-Arctic. The Kwakiutl were made famous by Franz Boas and his extensive studies of almost all aspects of native life, from language and arts to history and body measurements (see Lecture Three). The Kwakiutl and other northwest-coast groups are also known for their totem poles and spectacular masks (such as those in the collections of the American Museum of Natural History and the Chicago Field Museum).

Kwakiutl subsistence is based around salmon, which are seasonally abundant and can be dried for eating year-round. The Kwakiutl have a matrilineal society with a chiefdom style of political organization. Kwakiutl chiefs compete with one another to build their power through potlatch feasts (see Lecture Seventeen). During potlatch feasts, which would last for several days, hosts ply their guests with food and gifts. In addition, there are displays of conspicuous destruction—with canoes, artwork, and blankets sunk or burned. Potlatches were incredibly costly, and chiefs would often have to save for years to throw one, but a successful potlatch would secure valuable political allegiances. Some have argued that the

potlatch also served as a form of insurance—if the salmon did not run one year, neighboring chief's potlatches could provide needed food and supplies. Potlatches were banned in Canada for many years as irrational acts of destruction. Recently, they have been revived by a new generation of Kwakiutl reclaiming their heritage.

Maya

When one thinks of the Maya, the first images to come to mind are likely of Classic-era Maya civilization (A.D. 250–900) that flourished in the lowland forests of Central America. Yet there are more than 6 million Maya people living today in southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras. In Guatemala, the Maya make up over half of the population.

The Maya of Guatemala are concentrated in the thousands of small, rural communities spread throughout the western highlands. Because of rugged terrain and social isolation, this is an area of great linguistic diversity; 21 separate Mayan languages are spoken in Guatemala alone. Just as Spanish is the *lingua franca* of Guatemala, Catholicism is the common religion, but here, too, we find significant variation. Native shamans still maintain sacred ancient calendars and perform rituals, and Protestant missions are making significant inroads.

The vast majority of Maya in Guatemala are subsistence farmers, growing the staple crops of corn and beans. Guatemala is a country of stark inequalities, and the Maya suffer disproportionately from lack of land and poverty. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, they also suffered from military campaigns against communist guerrillas (a period known as *la violencia*). In Lecture Twenty-Two, I call on my fieldwork in the town of Tecpán Guatemala, to show the lasting impact of the violence on traditional lifeways.

It is easy to see the modern Maya as victims, but we must not lose sight of the fact that they take an active role in constructing their lives. Maya farmers around Tecpán, for example, have begun exporting snow peas and broccoli to the United States, using their traditional skills to increase their earnings by tapping into a global market. As we see in Lecture Twenty-Three, Maya activists in Guatemala and Mexico have also been successful in recent years in pushing for indigenous rights reforms.

Sambia

The Sambia are an Anga-speaking group in the New Guinea highlands. *Sambia* is a pseudonym used by Gilbert Herdt, the anthropologist who has worked with the Sambia since the late 1960s. Herdt used a pseudonym to protect the isolated Sambia from unwanted attention following the publication of his work.

The Sambia are a patrilineal chiefdom-level society. There is a stark division between men and women. Men view women as potentially polluting and try to keep contact to a minimum. Sambia houses have separate areas for men and women, and there are even separate male and female paths through their villages. Menstruating women are required to move out of their houses and into a menstrual hut located outside the village proper. Men, for their part, spend much of their early lives living in the village men's hut.

As discussed in Lecture Ten, the male initiation rites are the most dramatic aspect of Sambian society. The Sambia believe that males are not born with a supply of semen. Thus, to turn them into men, prepubescent boys are required to drink the semen of older boys. They learn this secret ritual through an intense initiation ceremony, after which they will live in the men's hut and practice ritualized homosexuality until they get married in their early 20s. After the birth of their first child, men are no longer supposed to have sexual contact with other males. Yet a fear of females as depleting a man's semen supply keeps men suspicious of their wives.

With increasing contact with the outside world (led by Seventh Day Adventist missionaries), the Sambia today are abandoning many of their former customs—moving into Western-style houses, going to church, and rarely conducting male initiations.

Trobrianders

The Trobrianders are a matrilineal chiefdom located on a string of small islands off the coast of Papua New Guinea. They were first studied by Bronislaw Malinowski during World War I (see Lecture Four) and have since become a classic case study in cultural anthropology. Annette Weiner conducted an important restudy of the Trobrianders in the 1970s, focusing on a number of aspects of women's lives that Malinowski missed.

As discussed in Lecture Twelve, the Trobrianders are a matrilineal society with four ranked clans. Although descent is traced through female lines, men hold the formal positions of power (inherited from the mother's brother). Contrary to the expectations of Freud's Oedipal complex, adolescent Trobriand boys have tensions, not with their fathers, but with their mothers' brothers. Malinowski used these data to argue against the universality of the Oedipus conflict. Malinowski also wrote that a young man is obliged to marry his father's sister's daughter (a cross-cousin); Weiner found that although this may be a cultural ideal, in practice, men most often do not marry a cross-cousin. High-ranking Trobriand males often have several wives, which increases their kinship ties and political prestige.

A great deal of political maneuvering goes on between Trobriand chiefs jockeying for power. The material circumstances of chiefs are much as they are for everyone else—there is not much variation in standards of living. Wealth is more symbolic than material, and a key symbol of wealth and power is yams, displayed in yam huts in front of chiefs' houses. A full yam hut is a clear sign of political prestige; the catch is that these yams must be received as gifts. Men receive yams through their wives (from a wife's brothers, in particular). Weiner shows that this practice puts Trobriand men in debt to their wives, an obligation that must be repaid with women's wealth (banana-leaf bundles and woven skirts). For upwardly mobile chiefs, redistributions of yams serve as a means of building up political power (see Lecture Seventeen).

The Trobrianders are also known for the *kula* trade ring, an elaborate system of balanced reciprocity, as discussed in Lecture Sixteen. In the *kula* ring, men have trading partners on islands in either direction. To these partners, they trade armbands (which move only counter-clockwise through the ring) and necklaces (which travel only clockwise); both are made of shells, and each item has a particular history of ownership associated with it. To possess a famous item brings prestige, although the items are not hoarded and constantly circulate.

Yanomamö

The Yanomamö live in the rainforest at the border between Venezuela and Brazil. They number about 20,000, spread out over a large territory and living in villages called *shabonos* of between 40 and 300 people. They are

best known from the long-term fieldwork of anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon, who worked primarily in the village of Bisaasi-teri in Venezuela.

In many ways, the Yānomamö are a classic patrilineal tribal-level society (see Lecture Fourteen). Rather than hereditary chiefs, Yānomamö *shabonos* have headmen who earn their positions through networking and leading by example. The Yānomamö practice a slash-and-burn style of agriculture, growing plantains, manioc, taro, sweet potato, and tobacco. Using poison-tipped arrows, they also hunt pigs, monkey, deer, and armadillos.

The Yānomamö live in a world filled with mischievous and malevolent spirits. Shamans use hallucinogenic snuff to contact and manipulate the spirit world. At death, the Yānomamö cremate the bodies of their dead relatives, crush up the bones, and drink the mixture in a gruel—symbolically rejuvenating their lineage.

As discussed in Lecture Fifteen, the Yānomamö are also an especially violent society, with frequent raids and warfare between *shabonos*. Men who have killed take on the status of *unokais* and generally have more wives than other men. Anthropologist Marvin Harris argues that the Yānomamö fight because of chronic protein shortages, but Chagnon counters that, in fact, they are fighting over women.

The journalist Patrick Tierney has published a scathing critique of Chagnon's work with the Yānomamö—accusing him of intentionally infecting the Yānomamö with measles as part of a secret experiment. While the genocidal allegations have been disproved, Chagnon's work raises important questions about the impact of anthropologists (and the trade goods they bring with them) on native communities.

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